

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

Master's Degree Programme in International Business Management

Slaveya Rusalova

INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OF KYMENLAAKSO  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES INTO THE LOCAL SMEs

Master's Thesis 2009

## ABSTRACT

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

University of Applied Sciences

International Business Management

RUSALOVA, SLAVEYA

INTEGRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
OF KYMENLAAKSO UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED  
SCIENCES INTO THE LOCAL SMEs

Master's Thesis

68 pages including 3 pages of appendices

Supervisor

Ulla Puustelli, Senior Lecturer

Commissioned by

Kymenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu UAS, Business

December 2009

Keywords

international students, foreign students, integration, LCCE,  
branding, university of applied sciences, work placement

Internationalisation and integration are important components of development policies and strategies in almost all types of companies. Each unit and team in a company is affected by the trend towards globalisation, which requires certain changes in organisational behaviour and to some extent in management styles as well. Here, globalisation is viewed as a social phenomenon. Brands are important as well because people in the global world wants added value to a product or service and expect to find value, prestige, image or lifestyle.

The target of this research was to explore the need for integration of international students from KyUAS into the business environment in the Kymenlaakso area. The empirical data was collected using qualitative methods: in-depth theme interviewing and benchmarking. The research question is "What needs to be done by the contributors to the research - our university, the companies in the area and the students - in order to integrate international students into the businesses?" The advantages for all the contributors to the research are also discussed. The research explores questions related to the function of the universities of applied sciences in Finland and the specific role of KyUAS in the area. Branding is assessed as a way to create new significance of the organisation of KyUAS and to create additional value for the stakeholders.

The results show that there is a need for better cooperation between the companies in Kymenlaakso and KyUAS in terms of developing mutual projects and also enhancing the networks where international students participate.

## CONTENTS

### ABSTRACT

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	Objectives, demarcation and research problems	8
1.2	Methodology	11
1.2.1	In-depth theme interviews	12
1.2.2	Benchmarking	14
1.2.3	Secondary sources	16
1.3	Structure	18
2	ADVANTAGES TO THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH	20
2.1	Advantages to Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences	20
2.1.1	The requirements of the Finnish Ministry of Education	22
2.1.2	Enhancement of KyUAS brand	22
2.1.3	Knowledge and strategic outcomes	26
2.2	Advantages to the students of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences	28
2.2.1	Learning experience in the Finnish business environment	29
2.2.2	Improvement of Finnish language skills	30
2.3	Advantages to companies	31
2.3.1	Hiring international workforce	34
2.3.2	Experiences from working with foreigners	36
3	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES	39
3.1	Analyses of the interviews	39
3.1.1	Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences	44
3.1.2	Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences' experience	45
3.1.3	HAMK University of Applied Sciences and another university of applied sciences	46
3.2	Benchmarking	48
3.2.1	Lahti University of Applied Sciences	48
4	CONSTRAINTS IN DATA COLLECTION	50
4.1	Attitude to foreigners	50
4.2	Researcher's own experience	51

5	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT	53
5.1	Summary of the outcomes	53
5.2	Recommendations for implementation	54
5.2.1	What should KyUAS do?	54
5.2.2	What should the companies do?	56
5.2.3	What should the foreign students do?	57
6	CONCLUSIONS AND BENEFITS OF THE RESERACH	58

## REFERENCES

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Mind map

Appendix 2. Concerns that might affect internationalisation

Appendix 3. Model: Practical training of foreign students in Finnish companies

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation and especially international integration have been set as important ingredients of companies' future development policies and strategies. The global world puts its pressure on each unit and team in an organisation. The demands for a change in or of the whole organisation are growing day by day. Carnall (2007) defines the process of change as an intellectual challenge and as a process for managing people and their uncertainty.

Branding becomes also important because it gives the special added value to the product or service. People are influenced not only by traditions but also by the rebels that break these traditions. Brands are more or less our life style. Organisations develop them to promote value, prestige, image or lifestyle. But not only that – brands show the audience that we care. We care to create better products or services, or we care to satisfy customers' needs and bring new meaning to the offerings.

The project for my master's thesis is related to integration of international students into the business environment in Kymenlaakso area. *Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences* is the education provider in the area and *offers versatile university level education* (KyUAS 2009). (The full name of our university is Kymenlaakso Ammattikorkeakoulu University of Applied Sciences but later the name KyUAS is used). As well as education and being involved in extra-curricular activities, the students acquire good opportunities on the job market. Nevertheless, that is more typical for the Finnish speaking students in Finland and with the foreign students in their home countries. The foreign students, studying in the International Business Programme, who might decide to stay in Finland and seek further education and/or a job, could encounter some difficulties. In order to apply for a master's programme, for example, they need 3 years of work experience before they become eligible candidates. In both cases, staying in Finland requires finding work.

*Foreign or international students* in this paper are the students of foreign origin, studying in the International Business Programme in English. There are international students in the Finnish programmes at KyUAS but they speak Finnish, although not always as a mother tongue. They will not be an object in this research.

There have been changes going on in Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences for a long time. However, students do not experience them as intensely as staff members. Students are happy to study with foreigners, so that they could learn about new countries and people from the source. First encounters with the problems of integration and internationalisation appear when foreigners apply for a summer job. Very often the replies contain the message 'learn Finnish and come again'. Then one starts thinking that the university needs to offer help: give information about local businesses, act as a media between students and businesses.

In 2003 our university organised the IBE Workshop (International Business Education). One of the participants in the workshop, from the North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, talked about how he handles the work placements for the students. And not only for the university students but for other foreigners who wanted to challenge themselves with a work placement in a Finnish company. Many participants related to the problems the speaker presented and proposed organising of similar service for the students in their institutions.

The development project requirement of the Degree Programme in International Business Management presented the opportunity to research this very problem and find ways to help foreign students to obtain jobs, work placements or projects in addition to their studies. The prospect of researching the possible integration of the students into business life will contribute to the development of KyUAS organisation and image. It can be considered as a chance to advertise what is the mission of KyUAS and how talented our students are. Personally, I expect to help reduce the resignation rate of the students and somehow delay

their intention to move to Helsinki or somewhere else in Finland, as soon as they arrive, just because it is easier to find work there.

Finland can produce a strong workforce since, according to the Ministry of Education, the professionals trained in universities of applied sciences respond to the needs of the labour market. Simultaneously, universities of applied sciences support local growth by conducting research and development (R&D). (Ammattikorkeakoululaki 9.5.2003/ 351.) This mission is possible only through cooperation with the entrepreneurs in the region and the active participation of the students.

The “Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015” argues that Finnish business, work and living environment have to become more attractive. In addition, it relies on international networking, competitiveness and innovativeness as factors to improve the competence and education of the citizens (Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015). It is expected the research to offer additional motivation for continuing the internationalisation of the university.

Another issue that has recently been discussed is the retirement of the ‘baby-boom generation 1945 – 1949’. Although the concept has been coined as an American term, it is applied more often in European context. It denotes the phenomenon of the birth rate growth in some industrial countries straight after the World War II. (Phillipson 2007, 7.) Liikanen (2008) presents the real situation comparing the trends in Finland, Greece and Europe. The phenomenon is affecting most of the industrialised countries. From the foreign students’ point of view this means that there will be a need for workforce recruited from abroad. Foreigners educated in Finland are likely to have better opportunities on the job market.

A development project of this scale has a lot of challenges. Most of them, I presume, are related to me being a foreigner. The first reaction of the companies’ representatives might already be an appearance of their attitude

towards foreigners in general. Regarded as a part of the research, that can be either encouraging and creative or restrictive and frustrating.

### 1.1 Objectives, demarcation and research problems

Internationalisation of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences is essential for constructing the future image and development of the practices of the university as stated in the general strategy of KyUAS (Annual Responsibility Report 2008). In our case internationalisation does not only mean that there are people from different countries. It is significant part of the processes of enhancement of students' potential, that part of it being the understanding of the Finnish business environment. On the other hand, internationalisation will contribute to the attractiveness of business and living in Finland as well as to the creation of stable and prolific networks.

More and more students from different nationalities are trying to acquire multicultural experiences by joining the exchange programmes, or just applying for a study place in the International Business Programme. We offer a practical learning package and a challenging environment. It has been acknowledged by the students as well. However, there is a need for better organisation and coordination between us and our business partners in order to provide work placements and/or thesis topics in the field of studies for our international students. The enhancement of the Finnish students' skills has not been a problem. That is why this research concentrates mainly on foreign students' abilities and opportunities to get the work placement they have applied for. The curriculum for the International Business Programme has been developed together with the representatives of the businesses, which means that the skills the students acquire are in compliance with the demands of working life.

The research is concentrating on SMEs. According to the law (Ammattikorkeakoulu laki 9.5.2003/ 351: 4§), the universities of applied sciences are set up to help and support the SMEs. One of the main roles of the universities of applied sciences is to facilitate and support the



internationalisation endeavours of the SMEs. In Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, the involvement in community research projects has reached a new altitude with the development of the Learning and Competence Creating Ecosystem (LCCE) concept. It nourishes the relationship between innovation and education and forms a new viewpoint to the contribution of KyUAS to the business and innovation in the region. The questions raised in this research are connected to the LCCE concept because it adds value to the brand of KyUAS, supports the learning in our organisation and connects the businesses with the students.

Siru Vainio, the President of Kouvola Yrittäjät, said that in Kouvola there are many small and big businesses and not so many medium sized business. Since the big companies have resources to internationalise and many of them are already international, their involvement in providing training and/or research topics for foreign students will not be discussed here.

At the beginning of the project, difficulties in relating the research questions to the actual research were experienced. My endeavours started with the presumption that Finnish language knowledge will be the main hindrance to applying for a job. For this reason the introductory questions were related to how well students should speak Finnish language. The questions asked were: Do we need to change our curriculum? What are the benefits from integration?

After some preliminary study, the number of the research questions was narrowed down to one: **What needs to be done by the contributors to the research - our university, the companies in the area and the students - in order to integrate the international students into the local business?** It is the research question that this project is answering to.

Additionally, the benefits to all parties will be discussed in chapter 2, as they will be used as a starting point in the discussion about integration and internationalisation. Figure 1 presents graphically the research problem. It illustrates the connection of all the contributors to the research. Additionally the

mind map, created at the start of the research is attached as appendix (apex1). It is made for the purpose of showing the direction of the research as well as linking the research question to the participants in the research.

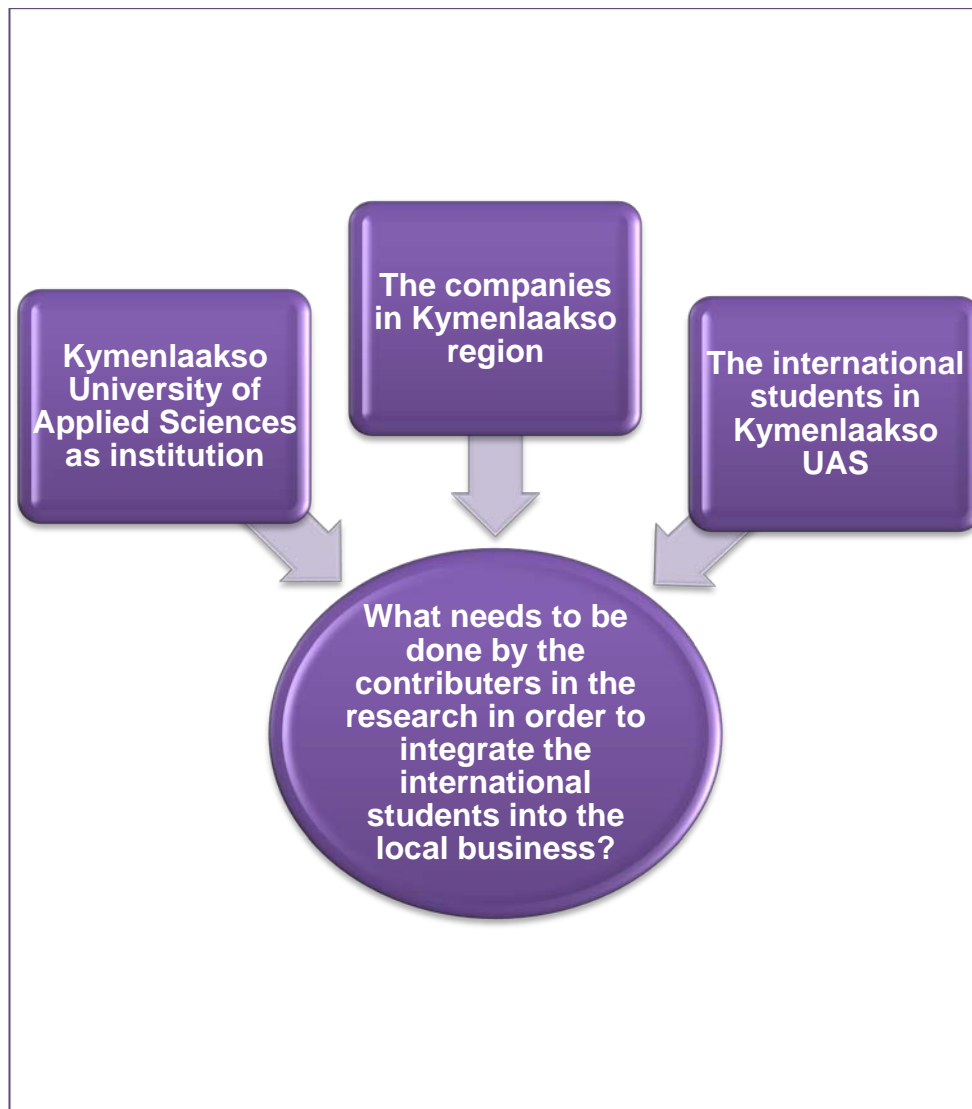


Figure 1: Graphic representation of the research problem

## 1.2 Methodology

The data is collected using qualitative methods. Qualitative methods can be appropriate because of the social character of the research. Qualitative methods also include observations, documents and texts, the researcher's impressions and reactions. The goal is to understand the phenomenon from the point of view of the participants because quantifying the data might lead to loss of context. (Myers 2009; Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005, 109.)

The use of qualitative research methods allows the researcher to explore and to be intuitive (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005, 109). The interpretation of the data allows the researcher to intertwine her own experiences and cultural understanding into the research. Bryman and Bell (2007, 423) say that the researcher can be subjective and rely on her own impressions as well as being unable to make a distinction between what is significant and important. The researcher is the *main instrument of data collection* and all the observations, what was heard and what researcher decides to concentrate on is the researcher's choice. The problem of simplification and lack of transparency are also critical for the qualitative research. They can be avoided with criticism and well established research grounds (Bryman & Bell 2007, 423-4).

At the beginning of the interview the language of communication was established first in case the interviewee felt better speaking Finnish. All the interviews were held in English and many people felt that it is a good opportunity for them to practice their English, since they haven't spoken much in English". Since the interviews were not conducted in the interviewees' mother tongue a certain degree of anxiety and misunderstanding was to be expected. This can be considered either good or bad to the outcome of the research. Nevertheless, the research will depend on collecting reliable information and analyzing it critically. As Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005, 110) say, the researcher has to distinguish and stay away from preconception, *keep analytical distance* while employing previous knowledge.

The researcher has to possess *theoretical sensitivity* as Strauss and Corbin (1990, 41) term it. They describe it as the ability of the researcher to uncover the meaning of the collected data. *Theoretical sensitivity* is developed through good theoretical preparation before and through the research. It is also attributed through personal, professional experience and consideration. The results of the research are commented using conceptual rather than concrete terms. Lincoln and Guba (1985, 300 cited in Bryman & Bell 2007, 411 and Golafshani 2003, 601) use the term *dependability* for qualitative research which equals *reliability* in quantitative research. In order to determine whether the research is authentic or dependable, as mentioned above, there is need to follow up the “process and the product of the research” (Golafshani 2003).

The qualitative research gives better understanding of the answers received while interviewing. ‘Better understanding’ means that the researcher can interpret possible hidden clues after specifying and questioning further the message in the answer. It is to be acknowledged, though, that being a foreigner leaves the impression that the interview has been accompanied by a minor anxiety and possible cultural misinterpretations. As to the theoretical sensitivity, it is possible to acquire it during the years and with the preparation for the research. The ways of collecting data are discussed further.

### 1.2.1 In-depth theme interviews

An in-depth theme interviewing involves direct interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. It is an unstructured interview but *more often refers to both semi-structured and unstructured interviewing* (Bryman & Bell 2007, 213). The researcher is free to move the conversation in any direction. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005, 131-2) state that in order to run the interview competently, the interviewer needs to have an idea of the interviewee’s *background, values and expectations*.

Along with that, there is a real opportunity to explore the topic broadly, although the uniqueness of the interviews has a certain drawback: it makes it more

difficult to analyse and synthesise the results. Another point to consider is the possible subjectivity in interpreting the results and the evaluations. Nevertheless, the in-depth interview can be regarded a credible method in this case.

These interviews were carried out with people already involved in the process of internationalisation or will be asked to take part in the research – KyUAS, Kymen Yrittäjät ry, companies that are willing to get involved in the process. The companies that are approached are either our partners or are involved in some kind of internationalisation at this point.

One of the interviewees was Tiina Moberg, the President of Kymen Yrittäjät. Starting the interviews from Kymen Yrittäjät offers a good picture of the whole situation at the moment. It is a source of up-to-date information and contacts connected to business life in the area.

Kymen Yrittäjät ry (the Regional Organisation of Enterprises in Kymi) is an organisation in Kymenlaakso under the central administration of the Federation of Finnish Enterprises. It was established 70 years ago and nowadays it unites more than 2600 members. There are 12 smaller regional organisations under Kymen Yrittäjät. Its main founding purpose was to administer and expand the mutual benefits of the entrepreneurs, members of the organisation regionally and in the country. During the years Kymen Yrittäjät has developed as an organisation helping private entrepreneurs to extend their networks within the organisation as well as outside of it. It promotes dynamic competition between businesses. (Kymen Yrittäjät n.d.)

From Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, Hannele Lappalainen was interviewed. She is responsible for the basic training of the Finnish business students in the university. For a number of years she was the basic training co-ordinator for foreign students as well. Her professionalism and friendliness were remarkable: she gave a number of good ideas, which are shared in the exposition. Hannele Lappalainen's experience of the attitudes of companies

towards foreigners does not differ much from my own. We share the opinion that many companies play on the safe side by relying on Finnish students rather than foreigners as their company's workforce. Hannele Lappalainen has been involved in many project and international activities and provided me with the lists of companies that arrange work placements for our students and the companies that are involved in different cooperation projects with our university. They are my starting point in conducting the companies' interviews. The interview with Hannele Lappalainen took place on 8 May 2008.

Päivi Arolainen-Peltola is the other interviewed person. The meeting was held on 26 May 2009. The discussion was about career opportunities for the international students and the contribution of KyUAS in helping them find jobs or work placements. She is the person in charge of the Career and Recruiting Services in KyUAS University of Applied Sciences.

### 1.2.2 Benchmarking

People learn either from their own experiences or from the others' experiences. In business and organisational development benchmarking is used as a tool to learn about other's experiences. As Moriarty and Smallman (2009, 487) put it, benchmarking is used by organisations, consultants and researchers and has been discussed as a developing concept through the years. They continue that it is in the search for organisations' best practices that superior performance is found. Moreover, it is a process for observing and following the development of leading in the field organisations (Kyrö 2004, 52; Moriarty & Smallman 2009, 487-89) and a practice of learning how to improve processes, activities, and management.

Benchmarking aids to explain the processes behind an organisation's excellent performance, determines who is the very best in the field, sets standards. Interviewing, as another qualitative approach, gives the opportunity to research the topic broadly and gives the researcher certain freedom to move the conversation in the direction of the topic. Thus both methods complement each

other and approach similar problems from different perspectives. Both approaches require competence and initial information on the research object. The use of both approaches in the research increases the accuracy when presenting the findings. Thus the credibility of the collected data increases as well.

On the other hand, benchmarking is characterised as retrospective and, in some cases, inefficient process. An inexperienced researcher might misinterpret results, which might slow down or even harm the learning processes in an organisation. (Kyrö 2004, 52; Moriarty & Smallman 2009, 495.) In my opinion, the above statement reflects the thoughts of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 41) about the researcher's *theoretical sensitivity* – efficient groundwork helps avoiding simplification.

Watson (1993, cited in Moriarty & Smallman 2009, 490) defined strategic benchmarking as a concept associated with market conditions where companies gain competitive advantage learning from *superior practices*. Later Kyrö (2003, cited in Moriarty & Smallman 2009, 490) referred to it as a *competence and network benchmarking*. For the benefit of this research it is essential to understand what way the other universities of applied sciences in Finland are involved in internationalisation. For that reason, it is appropriate to use strategic benchmarking. Strategic benchmarking examines the continuing strategy and approach for high success; improving the capability of dealing with transformation in the external environment. Strategic benchmarking can assist KyUAS to realign its organisational practices.

Investigating the other universities' practices will provide ideas of the strengths and weaknesses typical for KyUAS organisation. Thus KyUAS will be able to establish the degree of competitiveness among the universities of applied sciences in Finland. The possible performance gap might demand support and commitment in finding ways for enhancement of the image of KyUAS. As a method of research, benchmarking presents the opportunity to incorporate the best business practices into the organisational processes.

My intention was to benchmark at least four universities of applied sciences. For that purpose representatives of the training services of two universities of applied sciences were contacted. One prefers to remain unnamed because the University she is representing might feel criticised, since they do not have a special career program for international students. The other contact was Sven Rassi who represents HAMK University of Applied Sciences. The institutions they represent do not have special programmes which help students with their future careers. Students coming to study in their international programmes are responsible to find their own work placement. The university is not responsible for the students' career development. After researching their activities they were included in the interview section.

The experience of Lahti University of Applied Sciences is included as a benchmarking example. They have received special funding for the project, which is described in chapter 3.2.1 and is quite similar to what this research is about. Lahti University of Applied Sciences are hoping to begin a new project which might be a good start for cooperation with our university.

Another benchmarking target was Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences. During the interview with Tiina Moberg, she mentioned that they have received funding for researching the possibilities of finding work placements for foreign students in the area. My efforts to contact them were not successful.

### 1.2.3 Secondary sources

The research of Kreetta Pietilä, *Internationalization of SMEs: Case Kymen Yrittäjät ry*, which illustrates the attitudes of companies to internationalisation, will be one of the main sources of information and consideration throughout the research. Pietilä's research gives a well-founded and consistent picture of the realities of the business life in Kymenlaakso. The focus is on the opportunities for collaboration of the concerned institutions in the region and the real need for



networking and establishing mutual practices – not only between well-known participants but among potential contributors as well.

The literature is divided between the different parts of the research. There are three different parties involved in the research and separating the theory-related investigation will identify better the joint ground for all parties. It might be easier to follow and create the framework for identifying the research as a development project.

The sources include definitions of learning organization and international education (Hansen 2002; Lorange 1996; Senge 1994; Teichler 2005; Örténblad 2004) and suggestions about collaboration between educational and business institutions (Marri et al 2002). Collaboration and networking will demand more central role in the research, as they have proved to be an integral part of the business and education. The local knowledge and research on Finnish integration environment will not be neglected either (Välimaa 2004). The views of the Finnish Ministry of Education and ARENE (the Rector's Conference of the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences) are taken into consideration as well.

The literature defines different strategies and motivation areas of the internationalisation process of higher education institutions (Altbach & Knight 2006; Ayoubi & Massoud 2007; Thune & Welle-Strand 2005). It provides worldwide insides on internationalisation, including possible setbacks during the process of internationalisation (Jansink et al 2005; Häyrynen-Alesto & Peltola 2006; Parsons & Fidler 2005). The benefits to our organisation need to correspond to the strategic development and the changes that will occur during the implementation stage. The learning organisation requires a certain change of mind and promotion of deeper connections to the participants in the process of change. As supporting literature I will use the arguments of Senge (1994), Davenport and Prusak (2000), Carnall (2003), and others in order to identify the necessity of change or modification of activities in our university.

### 1.3 Structure

The research consists of four parts which identify the processes constituting the whole research. The first part concentrates on the requirements of the universities of applied sciences, developed by the Ministry of Education. They will be evaluated and used as a reference point when assessing the gaps between practices in different universities of applied sciences. Subsequently, the research determines the benefits to the organisations involved in the integration. It discusses the enhancement of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences' brand and evaluates the possible experiences that companies anticipate when hiring international workforce. The LCCE concept is also discussed.

The second part describes the benchmarking and interviewing results. The experience of our university is also discussed in this part. KyUAS has established good cooperation with its partners during the years. Our students have been promoted as "KyUAS students" without separating them into Finns and foreigners. The foreigners are a small percent from the number of all the students and for that reason the experience of our university can be mostly associated with the Finnish students.

Parts three and four are mainly related to the experiences that companies have and the researcher's experience. Setbacks are inevitable when there is a mix of ideas and cultures. The challenge and the opportunities are vast. The constraints of the research have a special role in the development project since they are the basics for defining our future strategy and approaches to companies that are not included in the research. The implementation recommendations are provided also in this part of the research. Figure 2 represents graphically the structure of the research.

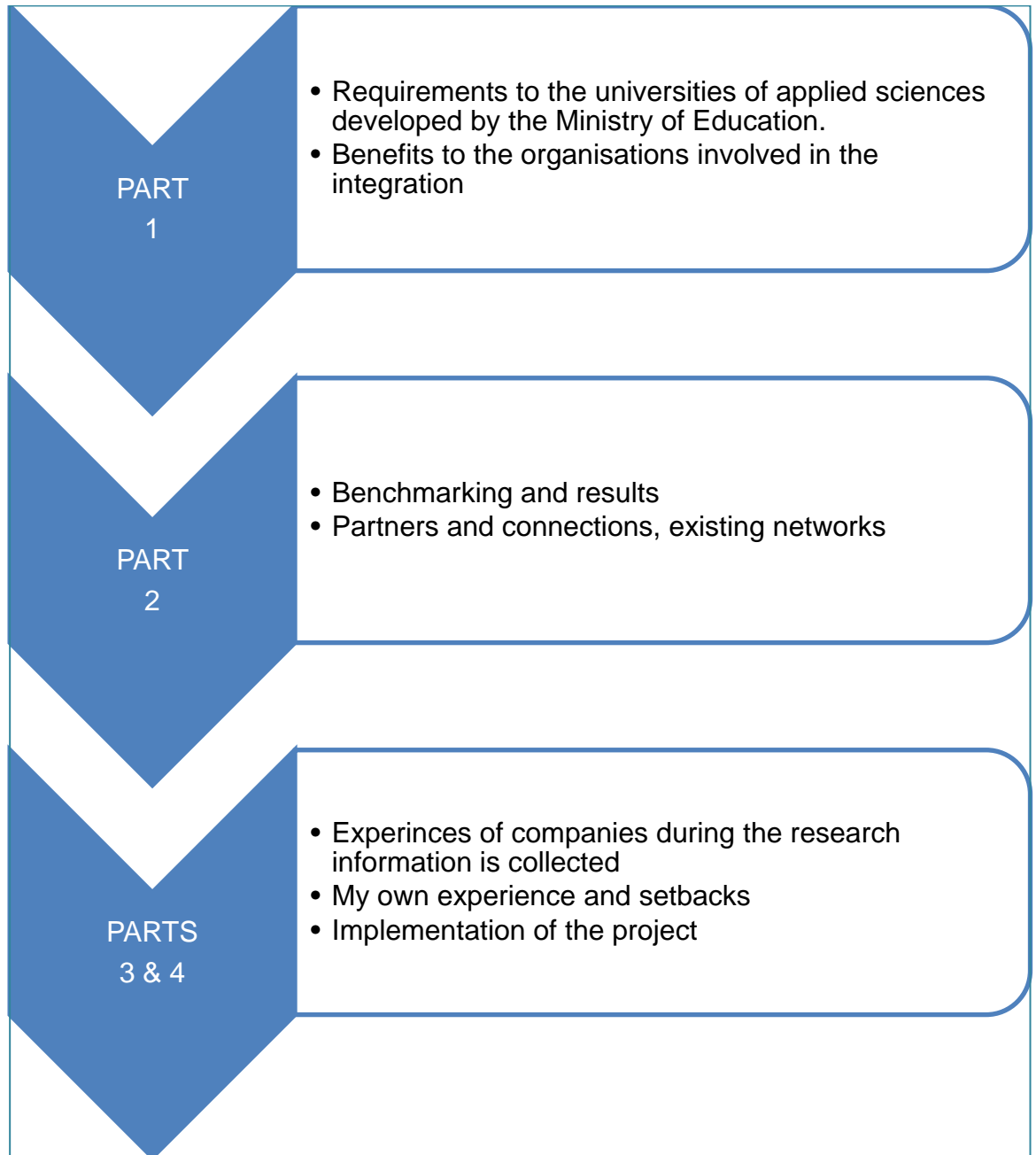


Figure 2: Structure of the research

## 2 ADVANTAGES TO THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

This chapter discusses the advantages of the research to the parties and organisations involved in it. It is important to understand how each of the participants in the research or the whole group can build better network as well as develop their own organisational culture in order to work together and gain learning experiences.

### 2.1 Advantages to Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences

Organisational learning is an integral part of the strategic development within a business programme (Lorange 1996, 5). Cooperating with businesses in the region is one side of the learning. The other side is related to the question how the business programme supports cooperation. Sufficient business programme is crucial for organisational learning because it supports all the activities outside the organisation in the most creative manner.

Organisational learning, innovation and cooperation in KyUAS are integrated into the LCCE concept. The LCCE concept is developed to define the nature of the cooperation between universities of applied sciences and businesses. It presents the approach of combining innovation and learning as an ecosystem which comprises social, spatial and virtual environments. The new curriculum is competence based and more than 200 projects per year will be done by KyUAS students. The new campus at Kasarminmäki is viewed as a functional solution for creating an open innovation environment. (Pelli & Tulkki 2009.) For that particular objective KymiDesign & Business community has been established in the Faculty of International Business and Culture. It is a unit which promotes learning and innovation, maintains the existing enterprises as well as the founding of new ones, and supports internationalisation and networking. Its versatile activities and expertise facilitate the improvement of company's competitive advantage. (Tulkki 2009, 36.) One might say that the main aim of the LCCE concept and KymiDesign & Business is the production of better quality graduates.

The trends supporting learning can also be discussed as two sides of one and the same phenomenon: the impact of the global trends compare to the local trends. Välimaa (2004, 27) and Altbach & Knight (2006, 27) suggest that globalisation has to be considered a social fact - whenever one mentions it, one connects it to its economic aspect. But at the same time globalisation defines some of the rules in social relationships. It is also linked to the domination of English speaking countries through the dissemination of the language, culture, technology, and the like (Välimaa 2004, 28-9).

In the same article Välimaa (2004) presents the orientation to globalisation and the development of higher education in Finland as a joint process. Although he refers to the universities, the increasing role of the universities of applied sciences, according to the Rectors' Conference of Finnish UAS (ARENE) can be placed in the same group. Universities of applied sciences promote the professionalism and working life as inseparable, which means that globalisation as a trend, as Välimaa (2004) is describing it, is entirely relevant to the development of the universities of applied sciences as well. The person in the global world pursues international studies in order to achieve a better future in personal and professional life. *International education is a dynamic concept that involves journey or movement of people, minds, or ideas across political and cultural frontiers* (Hansen 2002, 5). In addition, it shapes people's lives and covers a lot of different areas. It enhances people's language skills, creates social and professional networks, and influences the future in a distinct way. The greater international involvement has pushed the higher education into creating a new social environment where students can enhance their language skills and intercultural awareness (Altbach & Knight 2006, 27; Hansen 2002, 5-6). Living abroad demands cultural sensitivity and interpersonal skills, which are developed on the spot. The whole institution in this case will benefit from the process of globalisation (Välimaa 2004, 41) and the international education will help the participants in the process to find their common goals (Hansen 2002, 9). Moreover, people learn to work together (Hansen 2002, 11; Altbach & Knight 2006, 27).

KyUAS University of Applied Sciences has become a gathering of foreign students because it offers programmes in English along with the Finnish ones. The atmosphere in the corridors and lobbies is similar to a small scale international conference. There students, literally from all over the world, meet each other, exchange ideas, learn together how to live in and enjoy the different conditions. In this sense it is a global place. The culture encounters and the common language boost the level of comfort of feeling part of the student society. At this point one can confirm that globalisation is a social phenomenon.

### 2.1.1 The requirements of the Finnish Ministry of Education

The Finnish Ministry of Education (FME) has set the goals for the universities of applied sciences: they need to train professionals in order to respond to the needs of the labour market. Simultaneously universities of applied sciences support local growth by conducting research and development as it is stated by the Finnish Ministry of Education in 'Polytechnic education in Finland. This mission is possible only with cooperation with the companies in the region and the active participation of the students. The universities' of applied sciences administration task is then to facilitate that cooperation and promote ways to expand the relationship between students and businesses.

The "Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015" sets the objectives with the argument that Finnish business, work and living environment have to become more attractive. In addition, it relies on international networking, competitiveness and innovativeness as factors to improve the competence and education of the citizens.

### 2.1.2 Enhancement of KyUAS brand

Universities of applied sciences have a particular role in reacting to changes in society by modifying their learning requirements to the needs of the work life. According to the European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET 2008, 4), the education offered by universities of applied sciences is

more interdisciplinary and more oriented to the solution of practical problems, compared to the one provided by universities. Universities of applied sciences put emphasis on knowledge and skills oriented to professional practice rather than instruction in purely scientific and academic focus. Professional education has achieved new dimension – it concentrates on developing problem-solving capabilities of a more general quality. (UASNET 2008, 5.) This is extremely important since the objective of the knowledge society implies a need for ongoing updating and retraining of all knowledge workers. Major actions in this area are knowledge transfer and application of knowledge through education and research (UASNET 2008, 7). KymiDesign & Business in KyUAS is an active supporter and a participant in developing the processes of knowledge transfer. It employs the students in projects and connects their qualifications with the needs of the businesses in the area. KymiDesign & Business can be seen as a unit supporting the brand of KyUAS in a creative way.

Jevons (2006, 466) sees branding of universities as a strategy to manage the institution, because then the resignation percent will decrease – the values and the goals of the university will match with those of the students. It is a fact that higher retention rates are credited to more prestigious institutions – the student selection process *increases compatibility between student and school*. (Belanger et al, 2002 cited in Jevons 2006, 466.) Brands tend to reduce the risk when buying something. There is a dilemma - can students be considered customers, since they do not directly pay for their education. One point of view would be to look at what they get, because they pay with their time and youth; they pay with their hopes to get better life after they complete their education. As poetic as it might sound this type of payment might be even more valuable than the real value of money.

In terms of enhancing the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences brand, there will be a great number of benefits for each unit of the organisation. Branding will create different competitive advantage, in comparison to other universities of applied sciences – the fact that students have the opportunity to advertise themselves and get work placements in Finland. The image of the

university will become to a certain level a characteristic for the region. The offering of new options in addition to their study place, the work placement, will support the overall objectives of the university and the requirements of the Finnish Ministry of Education.

Jevons (2006, 466) suspects that branding of universities is wrong and difficult to achieve if it is done for the wrong reasons. It is difficult to communicate the brand to customers and employees if there is not a clear idea of why the efforts of building the brand are necessary. The reputation of certain institutions is gained through achievements. For example, Australia's Monarch University became popular through its in-vitro fertilization program (Jevons 2006, 467).

From all the arguments above, it is necessary to point out that university of applied sciences brand will be different from industrial brands. While industrial brands possess unique market position, university brands are viewed as "achievers of success" (KyUAS 2009) – their contribution is their people. These people are more often collaborating with other institutions than competing with them. The courses and researches offered by one university of applied sciences are similar to the other universities of applied sciences programmes. The branding then has to bring something to the stakeholders: different meaning, possibility to reflect their own endeavours. It has to represent something unique, which will distinguish the university among the others of the same kind.

As to the future, there is a prospect that by 2025 15 million students will study abroad, which compared to the number at the moment, 2 million, is a huge change. It includes the virtual movement of students as well – the knowledge economy will continue to grow. (Altbach & Knight 2006, 34-5.) The objective of the Finnish Ministry of Education is to double the number of international students, researchers and experts by 2010. Fifteen percent of the graduates are expected to be foreigners according to the Finnish Ministry of Education (2001)

The trend of increasing number of foreign students not only all over the world but also in our university is another factor expected to contribute positively to



the brand of KyUAS. The data in figure 3 shows that the number of the foreign students starting the International Business Programme is increasing each year compared to the number of the Finnish students starting the same programme. Developing a good brand will contribute to retain the number of the students starting their studies in the International Business Programme.

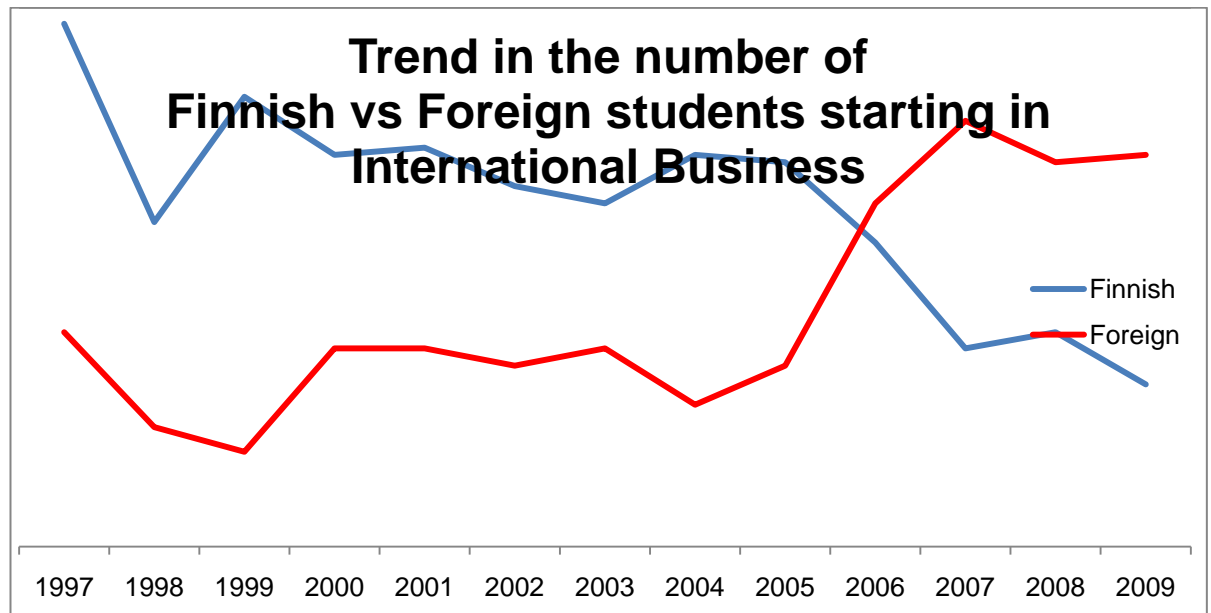


Figure 3: Trend in the number of Finnish vs. foreign students starting in International Business at KyUAS (Clack 2009, 40)

However, there are several concerns that can affect the flow of international students in any country in the world. The categorisation of Altbach & Knight (2006, 35) shows these concerns as affecting the further development of already created university networks. They can influence the position of KyUAS as an international institution, although Välimaa (2004, 30-31) states that the Finnish learning environment differs significantly from the others in Europe. As these concerns are of minor significance to the research at this stage but most likely they will have some influence in the future they are attached as an appendix.

### 2.1.3 Knowledge and strategic outcomes

Learning organisation as a concept has gone through rapid changes to become the one understood these days. The terms used to identify the concept are *competence*, *knowledge* and *learning* and Örtenblad (2004, 129) and Jansik et al (2005, 40) believe they will be indefinitely popular. Furthermore, Örtenblad (2004, 129) argues that many scholars, in their aspiration to define the concept had used quite vague terms like '*a never ending journey*', '*a tentative road map*', '*still indistinct and abstract*'. Learning has to be inspired by change on both organisational and individual levels (Kets de Vries 2006, 97-8; Lorange 1996, 6; Senge 1994, 18). The evolution of the ideas is affecting the internal organisational learning but at the same time it influences the changes delivered from the external environment (Senge 1994, 7). While learning, individuals are empowering each other and their ideas evolve. Each idea, then, will alter together with other ideas and will influence what occurs next.

Lorange (1996, 8) describes learning partners sharing the learning organisation as a practice of seizing opportunities. He explores the idea of a global general management, which focuses on action-oriented strategy. The organisation, in this case KyUAS, has to find new a way in facing its changed environment (the students with new opportunities of getting acquainted with the Finnish business life). That is the prospect of changing the perception of the organisation. The action-oriented focus defined by Lorange (1996, 8) will act as an essential part in creating an environment that facilitates the construction of high-quality networks of relationships. These networks will function on the basis of outstandingly developed communication and different forms of feedback in order to be enhanced. Moreover, they will function only if they are interdependent.

Lorange (1996, 11) builds a model of learning partner relationships. He thinks that a learning organisation is driven by the types of research activities and they will influence the pattern of developing learning organisation. Additionally there is a focus on the need for a collaborative research, which sometimes is totally

neglected. Another idea supported by the aggregated pattern of learning partnership, shown as Figure 4, is that diversity, instead of *pulling together* the partners might *pull them apart*. In this case it will be important to choose specific relationships in order to develop a *meaningful accumulation of research-based knowledge*. (Lorange 1996, 11).

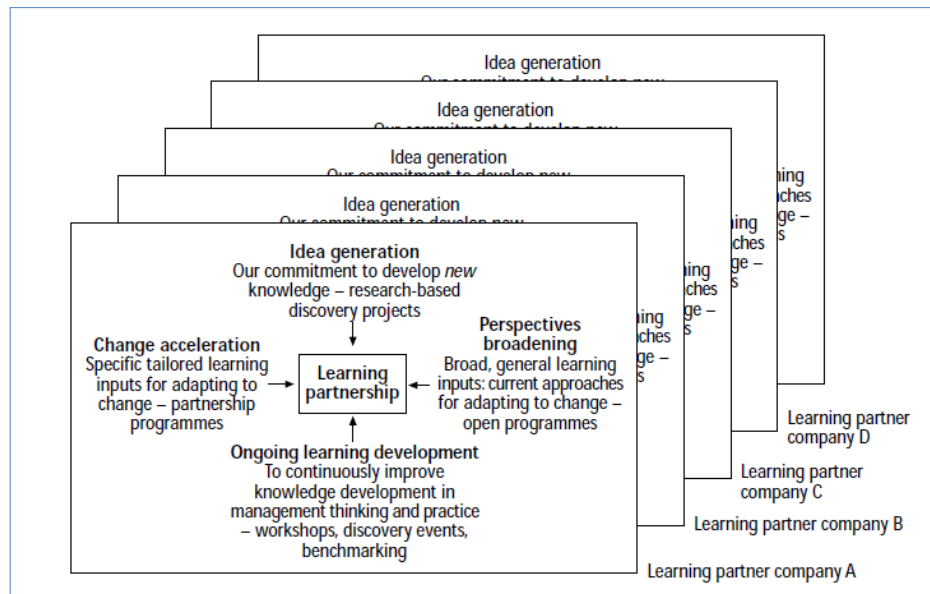


Figure 4: An aggregated pattern of learning partnership (Lorange 1996, 11)

With the development of the LCCE concept in KyUAS, the model of Lorange achieves practical application in KyUAS. It is important for universities of applied sciences to form as many learning partnerships as possible, which contribute to better quality education and innovation. Learning partnerships enhance the quality of the process of learning and competence building as well. Creation of learning partnerships intensifies the course of change. Change is difficult, says Carnall (2007, 3) and we can confirm that with personal experiences. We oppose to change first and then accept it because everything else has changed. Carnall (2007, 254-79) investigates what he calls the '*building blocks*' of change: throughout the whole chapter one can detect the important role of the *two-way communication*. It guarantees that each member of the organisation will be involved in the change, because he/ she is already talking about it with the others. The best way to transfer knowledge is through

communication (Carnall 2007, 278-9; Davenport & Prusak 2000, 88) – *let people talk and listen to one another* (Davenport & Prusak 2000, 88).

As shown earlier (figure 3), the number of the foreign students studying in the International Business Programme is increasing constantly. Although someone could argue that there is no need to verify that they are participating in the communication process, it is a matter of belonging to the community, feeling accepted and welcome.

*“Something unexpected happened! There is not a single word in English where you can go if you are ill, especially in the weekend. My tutor told me to call her anytime but everyone has the right to one day holiday, right. I wandered the streets of Kouvola for few hours not finding any label which pharmacy is opened. Then suddenly a girl came to me and asked do I need help, I must have looked like hell. She suggested I have to go to see a doctor to the hospital in Kuusankoski. She took me there with her own car. I was amazed, so happy, and almost healthy. Then I decided that I will stay half an year more here, in this amazingly warm country.”* (Student from Spain)

## 2.2 Advantages to the students of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences

Discussion about benefits brings the question of earned profits in terms of capital. Altbach & Knight (2006, 28) claim that it is not always the case. The main motivation in the activities related to internationalisation is to enhance the research and knowledge capacity and to expand intercultural networking. Nevertheless many universities charge high fees in order to get international students for different projects. (Altbach & Knight 2006, 28.)

In the case of KyUAS it is an excellent opportunity to have students from different countries. They do not pay for their education. Taking part in different projects related to local business can bring advantages not only to the students but to the companies they are working for as well. The knowledge on

international business environment and the gain for their future work employment (taking part in a project or working for foreign company is a very powerful assertion in the CV) are few of the benefits students can get.

*“Studying in Finland is great. It is calm and clean. It’s free of charge and it is so much different from my home country. Here you can be creative and free to do whatever interests you. In my country there is a problem ... well not anything special but you just can’t be you. And what happens then? Well I am still afraid to tell me mother that I will stay here after I graduate”* (Student from China)

### 2.2.1 Learning experience in the Finnish business environment

The Finnish Employment and Economic Development Office (2009, 14) offers opportunities to foreigners who want to work in Finland. It is encouraging integration and helps potential workers to develop their language skills. *The Finnish Integration Act aims at helping immigrants participate in Finnish society in the same way as everyone else living in Finland. Immigrants in the working age are supported in accessing working life. This speeds up the integration process, at the same time ensuring that the immigrants’ competence and education are utilized by the Finnish society.*

*“I am so scared that I will not find a job after I learn Finnish. We were once visiting a Finnish company and there all were working hard. I guess I will need some lessons how to behave there. It is very different from my home country. For example, if you are a sales person then you only sell. And here you need to arrange the shelves as well.”* (Student from Russia)

Finnish business environment has its peculiarities. People work independently and on their own initiative. All workers know what is expected from them and the organisation relies on them to complete the job they are hired for. It is very common for a Finn to make a decision without asking the superior first. In

China, for example, the organisation is hierarchical and it produces different type of work relationships. There is a clear distinction of the responsibilities and that means that decisions are taken only at the top of the hierarchy. Spaniards believe that hierarchy is good and positive for any type of business as the World Business Culture website claims.

*“It is very awkward in the Finnish classroom sometimes. All are equal: teachers are called by their first names; students sometimes behave disrespectfully. But the overall atmosphere is very pleasant. I am not stressed; my mind is not freezing every time the teacher looks at me. But, hey, listen to me! If you ever come to Czech don’t even dream that you can address the professor by his first name (we have mostly man professors) or be in class without having researched beforehand!”* (Student from Czech Republic)

Although there are a lot of projects and initiatives for integrating foreigners, there is still a doubt that the organisations are not doing enough for them. As the project advances, it comes clearer that there are deeper issues to be handled in the future. Job counselling might be worthwhile at the university. It could be one of the ways to show that KyUAS is interested in what students will do even after they graduate. Help with career planning and alumni activities convey the feeling of belonging to the community. One might say that the LCCE concept reinforces the connections within the community as well and contributes to the development of identity in harmony with the best practices of the organisation.

### 2.2.2 Improvement of Finnish language skills

The development of the research idea was started with the presumption that Finnish language knowledge will be a hindrance to applying for a job. For this reason the questions asked are: How good Finnish language students should speak? Do we need to change our curriculum? What are the benefits from integration?

Language skills are important for continuing studies or living in Finland. Learning the local language is one of the most important prerequisites for integrating into the Finnish society. There are various opportunities for foreigners to study Finnish – independently, at language centres, upper secondary schools for adults and open universities (Employment and Economic Development Office 2009, 15). Many students take these opportunities, especially if they plan to stay in Finland longer. Work placements support this initiative with offering language surroundings. It is not expected that the trainees will start speaking fluent Finnish after their practical training, but they will get at least some kind of self-confidence. Nevertheless, the priority is on the experience gained from business life. Pietilä (2007, 70) confirms that it is not only beneficial for the students but also for enterprises - they will *get information, help and ideas with a reasonable cost*.

### 2.3 Advantages to companies

The Ministry of Education has set the goals of the universities of applied sciences as follows: they need to train professionals in order to respond to the needs of the labour market. Simultaneously universities of applied sciences support local growth by conducting research and development according to the Finnish Ministry of Education. This goal is possible to achieve only with cooperation with the entrepreneurs in the region and the active participation of the students. The universities of applied sciences are facilitating that cooperation and encourage the expansion of the relationship between students and businesses.

Today's companies are progressively searching prospects in a global environment which is a practical result of multinational, cross-cultural situations they have once encountered. This means that the academic institutions have to be aware of how to approach the new customer environment. *New customer organisations* are created in a sense that companies need to know where their executives come from and what type of learning they belong to. (Lorange 1996, 8.)

The development of common curricula, which serves both the university and company, is important for creation of new relationships in learning organisation. Lake (2008) states explicitly that there are a great number of institutions which have already created programmes for that special purpose. KyUAS can be a good example of collaboration between companies and university of applied sciences, since the business programmes are developed with the active participation of companies' representatives in Kymenlaakso.

International business is done by 35.6 per cent of the entrepreneurs in Kymenlaakso. Traditionally paper and transport are more internationally active: direct export is the preferred mode for internationalisation, followed by indirect export. The internationalisation of enterprises has been typical for entrepreneurs with previous experiences – work in international companies either in Finland or abroad. Kymen Yrittäjät is providing services which include joint projects with universities and others. (Pietilä 2007, 66.)

KyUAS has a long tradition in cooperation with the businesses in Kymenlaakso. KymiDesign & Business unit is the link between students and businesses and a learning environment for teachers and students as well. However, the question to what extent the international students are involved in projects still exists. Certainly we want to think that the whole KyUAS students' community is equally involved. Very often it happens that Finnish students take active participation in such type of projects, which are not always available for foreign students.

There is a very positive example, though, of the last year project for one of the International Business groups (IB07). The students had research tasks which were ordered by companies in the region. For the Process Writing & Presentation Skills course they were supposed to prepare peer assessment sheets, describing what part of the written work has each of the group members done. The results demonstrated that the students were working in very productive teams, dividing the work in the project and handling different specialised tasks. Finnish students were mostly involved in communication with



the companies; foreign students prepared questionnaires, SPSS designs, figures and graphs. The overall experience of the students was that they worked hard but had very well defined responsibilities in the group which made it very easy to accomplish the project together. This is a good example that foreign students can be equally involved in projects and do the job as anyone else. In the new curriculum, similar projects continue and increase by number – each module includes a project. Taking part in projects will make the foreign students more self-reliant in different work situations.

Tiina Moberg (2009) suggested that projects for foreigners could be initiated by Kymen Yrittäjät as well. They do not need to be anything big and difficult – small projects can also benefit the companies and the researcher. Tulkki (2009, 36) sees the universities of applied sciences as real innovators and key participants in the integration of research and education. Small initiatives contribute to integration and can be innovative too.

Pietilä (2007, 69) has found out that Kymen Yrittäjät still needs to increase its cooperation with *internationalisation service providers* as the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES), the Finnish Foreign Trade Association (Finpro) and the Finnish Export Credit Agency (Finnvera). As mentioned previously the international business programmes can also be considered as a servicing unit in internationalisation. The role of KyUAS in internationalisation is not to be underestimated – foreign students can find their niche in helping local companies to internationalise. Kymen Yrittäjät can adapt the role of the link between KyUAS and the enterprises. Pietilä validates that the relationship between KyUAS and the enterprises can be a good source for essential knowledge about the business environment in Finland. At the same time companies can accomplish their projects with minimum cost and additionally contacting new potential employees. (Pietilä 2007, 70).

Foreign students might remain unnoticed when the students at KyUAS as a whole community are mentioned. The foreign students are definitely part of the community but the fact that they can overlook certain type of information can

exclude them from it. Very often, after one bad prospect, students do not try again. They make up their minds that it is useless to repeat the mistake already made. They are not aware of the company's intention and the miscommunication can reinforce their fears.

*"I went to one shop and asked if there is a need for help just before the Christmas holidays. The woman there got somehow angry and told me shouting: "Do you think that you are the perfect candidate? If we need someone we will take a Finn. Then I don't need to explain all the time the same things". I was so shocked that couldn't say a word for a day. I didn't dare to ask from anywhere else anymore. What if all are so rude?"* (Student from Germany)

### 2.3.1 Hiring international workforce

The movement of people is one of the fundamental rights of all citizens of the European Union (EU 2009). In addition the EU has promoted and funded generously programs for university students with academic experiences to move throughout Europe. ERASMUS is one of them and has become popular as the Bologna process harmonizes the *entire academic system of compatible degree structures, transferable credits and equal academic qualifications*. This process has expanded also in the Asia/Pacific regions and Latin America. (Altbach & Knight 2006, 29.)

These are facts that lead to constant opportunities or threats, depending on how companies want to think about them, for companies to choose their workforce from non-Finnish communities and not only from Europe but from around the world. That definitely puts pressure on many issues like education and experience, personality and cultural awareness. With the big number of international students in almost all big towns in Finland there is a good choice of workforce. Why not hire people who are educated here and know already a lot about society and business in Finland? They could be a valuable asset for the company's present and future.

Another factor that might force companies to choose foreign workforce, comes from the baby-boom phenomenon in Finland and Europe. At the beginning of the research it was mentioned that the baby-boom phenomenon places different types of challenges to companies around the world.

Liikanen (2008) talks about changes in the pension scheme and the dangerous situation in demographic structures. They are a result from the aging population phenomenon. The demographic change has influenced the global economy. The higher number of people, who retire, compared to the ones that start their working life leads to difficulties in supporting financially the pension funds. Along with fund deficits there comes the need of increasing the retirement age and improvement of the health services. (Liikanen 2008.)

The trend is forcing all countries in Europe to start considering what their best policies might be and how they will solve these problems. Figure 5 shows that in 2010 there are about 75,000 people more retiring from work life than entering it. These factors will affect the quality of life in the whole community. Since the tendency is a global challenge, there will be similar problems everywhere. The ability of the economies to adapt to the new challenges will be put to the test – the most flexible will have better chances of surviving.



Figure 5: Changes in the labour market in Finland (Liikanen 2008)

Hiring foreign workforce has a number of advantages. The language skills and local knowledge, in my opinion, are among the first qualities that benefit the companies. Languages are viewed as a bridge to other markets in business. They enable the communication, for example, with prospective customers or partners. If the company has objectives to expand its activities abroad, the host country expertise of a foreigner is an irreplaceable advantage. Cultural insight and foreign connections are among the other benefits that a foreigner can bring to the company. Successful networking is difficult without appropriate contacts – in many countries the establishment of good personal bond is the prerequisite for a successful and long-term business relationship.

### 2.3.2 Experiences from working with foreigners

Some of the interviewees mentioned that the difficulties from hiring foreigners do not depend on the language but on the fear of breaking into a small company's culture. It was suggested that people who have been working together for several years are afraid of new-comers. The communication with

their colleagues will be disturbed; the new employee might be seen more as a guest than as a member of the team. Gore (2007, 65) calls communication in culture the “social glue” that bonds people together. Language or verbal communication in general, is not as important as the non-verbal because objects and behaviour are elements in communication as well. Also food can suggest different meanings: the French like baguette while Finnish traditional bread is *reikäleipä*. This comparison certainly shows the kind of communication behaviour people value the most. That type of behaviour could create also a conflict, since it tells about the character of the whole nation. (Gore 2007, 65.) Cultural differences have very often been the *bone of contention* in many situations. Whenever something is not going well we are tempted to blame it immediately on the culture differences. Rarely people say: it is just another way of doing things. We do not naturally think of the culture as a system of information (Gore 2007, 67).

During the research the interviewees were provoked with questions related to hypothetical positive or negative experiences of organisations that hire foreigners. Some of the interviewees responded based on their previous experience. Sergio Adler (2009), the President of Aguila Ky and owner of cafe ‘Caminito’ said that he had had only positive experiences from working with foreigners. He also said that elderly people in Finland do not feel as comfortable with foreigners as the younger ones. Many of the elders speak other languages as well. It seems they do not want to use them because they have not practiced lately and are afraid of embarrassing themselves.

*“We had great time here! Everything was going well. I had sometimes the feeling that the customers didn’t take it so well. When elderly people come in and see that there is a Finn and a foreigner behind the desk, they start speaking with the Finn, they demanded to be served by the Finn. When younger people come they start speaking English even to the Finn. They seemed to be more opened.”*

Siru Vainio (2009) said that she has never had a foreign employee but considers it an opportunity *to learn about other peoples' world*. "You intrigued me now. It is good that we don't need to go too far away. The world has come to Kouvola". She said that she wouldn't start wondering what it is to work with foreigners, because you can't say anything before you experience it.

Sakari Pasanen (2009), the Managing Director of Tykkimäki Amusement Park, was excited of the idea to hire a foreigner or even more than one. His only concern is how well they speak Finnish.

*It is very inspiring to work with young people. They are closer to my customers and they will understand the best if we can improve something. But I care about my customers and their security depends on the Finnish language proficiency of the worker. That's why it is so important. But imagine how exciting is to speak to a foreigner who sometimes might speak your mother tongue better than you."*

### 3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

#### 3.1 Analyses of the interviews

The interview with Tiina Moberg was held on 3 April 2009. The discussion started with an introduction to the project. She found it extremely appealing and challenging. Her first comments were that we (KyUAS) do not do enough publicity for our foreign students. She expressed her concern that companies are probably hesitant to hire foreign students because they might be considered “spies” for their home countries. Very often high tech companies feel insecure about foreigners. That could be a hindrance for the foreign trainees or job seekers.

It was stated that inadequate Finnish language knowledge might be one of the obstacles for foreigners to find work placements. Tiina Moberg (2009) suggested that the corporate culture, especially of small companies, might be considered more important than the language. Small companies are usually very sensitive to welcoming an outsider. Their own culture is very much static – there are two to three people who do all the jobs - they might be not necessarily well educated; their language skills might be limited and then they will be afraid to accept a new member in the group.

*“There are mainly small companies in Kymenlaakso. They consist of 2 to 5 people, not specialized and not necessarily highly educated who have been working together for a very long time. It will be a big challenge for them to educate new personnel. They will be afraid that their working routine will suffer. Language might be an issue but I think it is more the culture than the language”. (Moberg 2009.)*

Furthermore, employers are aware that language is difficult to learn for a short period and if they take a foreigner to work for them, it will be not because of the Finnish language skills but for the other advantages to the company the foreigner will bring. It might be more important for the students to have cultural

and local knowledge, basic Finnish language skills and very good English language skills to be eligible job seekers.

The conversation continued with the suggestion that KyUAS should create a good strategy for marketing foreign students to the companies. It is important to increase the awareness of the companies: where our students come from, what they can do, what they are studying at the moment, what kind of projects they can handle, what kind of job they want, in what field of business they want to be engaged.

*“It is not necessary to publish a CV. It is enough to have basic information about the person: mainly what she/he can do but not only what education but concrete description of their skills. It is important to know what type of work placement she/he is searching for and what she/he is interested in.” (Moberg 2009)*

Moberg (2009) suggested that we could create a web site where all our international students would be presented. The web site could be linked to the web pages of different organizations like Kymen Yrittäjät and Kymi Chamber of Commerce. The next step will be to market the web site to the companies – printed material can be created for that purpose, which will promote the students and inform them about the existence of the web site.

KyUAS, with the help of entrepreneurs in the region can organise forums, seminars, and other types of events where companies and international students will meet. They need to know about each other – what both sides can offer. Public organizations have to be also included in these types of activities. EURES and TEKES have to be informed who our students are. Tiina Moberg said that Kymen Yrittäjät is more than glad to assist us in promoting the events to companies. There are a lot of companies located in Hamina and Kotka ports. They can hire students but the accommodation might be a problem. The availability of students' apartments in Kotka can be checked to determine if it is



possible to accommodate students from Kouvola, without paying extra for traveling or living away from Kouvola.

When promoting the international students of KyUAS, it is needed to remind them and the companies that the projects they can take part in do not need to be huge. There is a possibility to find something simple but productive, interesting and beneficial to both sides. The following company names popped up during the discussion. Tiina Moberg thinks they might be potential employers for foreign students because they have been to some extent involved in internationalisation processes earlier.

<b>Company</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Tykkimäki	Sakari Pasanen
Propentus	Sami Laaksonen
CTS Engineering	
Kouvolan Innovation	Merja Vainio
Kotkan Yrittäjät	Jobs for Russian students
Kouvolan Yrittäjät	Siru Vainio
Valkealan Yrittäjät	Lasse Kemppinen
Anjalankosken Yrittäjät	Eija Venäläinen
FINPRO	Heikki Savonlahti
TE Keskus	Soile Pieteläinen
Kouvolan Yritysmagneetti	
Verla (can offer jobs)	Paula Mietinen
Halton	
Kymidata Oy (enlarging to Baltic area)	Jyrki Metsola

Figure 6: Information about potential employees for foreign students (Moberg 2009)

Tiina Moberg suggested that students also have to get acquainted with unique Finnish companies like Verla Museum, Mustila Arboretum, Ruusun Tarhat, and Logistics Centers (there are certainly more to be listed). Cooperation with other educational institutions in the area might be the start of creating a very prolific

network. For example, the Centre for Adult Education (Aikuiskoulutuskeskus) could arrange a bus trip at a minimum price (at the same time the drivers get their final tests).

*“International students should learn about small and unique companies that exist in Finland. In Kymenlaakso there are a lot of them. Mustila Arboretum is something that you cannot see everywhere. When foreigners see that we can offer something simple but one of a kind, they will feel also special. I don’t mean that they should go to work there. It is enough that they get to know the structure of the Finnish business”. (Moberg 2009.)*

Bryman and Bell (2007, 224) suggest that prompting the interviewee is to be used if the researcher prompts in the same way all the interviewees. During the course of the interviews prompting to certain extent was made mostly because after the first interview there were issues which could be addressed during the other interviews. The prompting should not be distorting the answers and the results because to each of the interviewees was explained what the topic is and in what ways the data will be interpreted later.

Siru Vainio (2009) gave her opinion on hiring international workforce as well. During the interview questions not discussed with the others were raised. She said that some of the entrepreneurs might be afraid that after they hire foreigners, they might stay just for a short time with the company. It is difficult for small companies to allocate resources for training people who might be not long enough with the company. “It is a pity if someone comes to my company, gets the necessary training and then leaves. It will just disturb our work. We are two people working together”. (Vainio 2009.)

She noted that KyUAS was not present at the event called Yritystreffit which took place on 15 September 2009. The event is especially arranged for students to get to know businesses. In her opinion it would have been a good start for the international students to get to know the businesses and vice versa.

She suggested that in the future both parties have to follow and take care that there are participants from our university, especially the international students. Kouvola Yrittäjät issues a bulletin once per two months. Siru Vainio (2009) suggested that we could write a short note just to greet the entrepreneurs, the members of the Regional Organisation. This could start the marketing campaign of the students already at this stage of the project.

The interview did not differ much from the other interviews. Siru Vainio (2009) expressed her concern that students are not known in the area. Everyone knows that we provide well educated and skilful workforce for the region. They know about KyUAS's Finnish students, but not that the university offers a degree programme in International Business taught in English. "The fact that there are students who can help in internationalisation of small businesses gives another perspective to the process of internationalisation of small businesses", Vainio said.

The near future projects of Kouvola Yrittäjät are connected to activities in increasing the number of the medium size enterprises. At the moment there are mainly small enterprises and they need to increase the number of the employees in order to achieve better position on the market. They will be able to react faster on different orders if they have bigger number and better specialised workforce.

Sergio Adler (2009) agreed to be interviewed, although he is not a member of the Regional Organisation of Enterprises (Kouvola Yrittäjät). He offered an interesting perspective on the businesses in Kymenlaakso. In his opinion people do not want to know how they can benefit from cooperation. Although he has few students from KyUAS working with him, he did not know what KyUAS is offering. His own words were: "I am still trying to tell the people around that although we are foreigners we care about them, they are our customers. Being a foreigner and an entrepreneur is a challenge by itself". (Adler 2009.) The company that Sergio Adler owns is committed to help people and students to

earn their money. It was agreed that at a later stage of this research he can initiate cooperation with our university.

Sakari Pasanen (2009) said that the people he is hiring for the amusement park should speak Finnish. The main reason is the safety of the customers and the training days at the beginning of each season, which are conducted in Finnish.

*“I know about your students and I hire a lot of them for summer time. But I didn’t know that you that you have international students. I am not interested where they come from but how much Finnish they can speak, It is important for the job here to speak good Finnish. It came to my mind that they can go to places (in the amusement park) where they need few phrases, but it is matter of security too to be able to call help or explain what people need to do there.” (Pasanen, 2009)*

Good customer service is the main concern of his company. Five percent of his customers are foreigners. It is important that the workforce speaks other languages than Finnish too, but it is impossible to hire anybody without sufficient Finnish language knowledge. His company has a good cooperation with our university and it will continue. For him there is no difference what nationality the workers are if they speak Finnish. The interview with Sakari Pasanen took place on 30 September 2009.

### 3.1.1 Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences

The system of universities of applied sciences is still new. The first ones were founded in 1990s mostly as a trial. The first permanent universities of applied sciences were started in 1996. Their responsibility lies in the education of professional staff, according to the needs of the labour market. They also carry out research and development in order to maintain and encourage regional growth. As educational institutions they are ‘multi-field regional institutions focusing on contacts with working life and on regional development’. (Finnish Ministry of Education n.d)

### 3.1.2 Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences' experience

One of the interviewees from KyUAS was Hannele Lappalainen (2008). She presented a number of good ideas. Her opinion on the attitudes of companies towards foreigners is that many companies play on the safe side by relying on Finnish students rather than foreigners as their company's workforce. Hannele Lappalainen has been involved in many projects and international activities and provided a lists of companies that arrange work placements for Finnish students and the companies that are involved in different cooperation projects with KyUAS.

Hannele Lappalainen shared that the basic training the companies provide is usually paid unlike the specialization training which is funded by other means. As a rule, students involved in training in the public sector – the town of Kouvola or the county administration - are not paid. Anyway, the small companies pay the students since they have an agreement with the tax authorities that they will provide funding of €500 per month for trainees. International students also receive €500 per month if they have their training in Finland or abroad but not in their home country. Different unions involved in the training process guarantee the funding as well.

Creating a marketing plan of the KyUAS students to the companies was one of the suggestions that Hannele Lappalainen gave. In her opinion this will tell to the public and all the local companies that KyUAS offers good workforce, the reputation of the students and university will increase. The marketing plan could start with asking the students what they will need and how they feel about their future career. This type of project could be carried out in pairs of a foreigner and a Finn. In this way they could help each others in the work placement and improve their communication skills. Alumni activities can be developed further with the help of these types of projects.

*“It is very rewarding to work with students. We are lucky to have good students who can easily get jobs. We don't have any concerns about*

*them but the foreigners are something else. They are probably not searching enough. I think it will be a very good idea to pair them. Both will get something – better English, better Finnish, more social contacts”. (Lappalainen 2008.)*

Päivi Arolainen-Peltola (2009) expressed her concern that the university does not do enough for the international students. With the resources available, international students are literally pushed to go and find jobs for example in Helsinki or other places in Finland. The information left on [www.jobstep.net](http://www.jobstep.net) is in Finnish and difficult to access by foreigners. There is also a website ([Jobstep.com](http://Jobstep.com)) in English but it seems that it hardly gets to the attention of the employers in Finland. Päivi Arolainen-Peltola was very helpful and agreed to support, as much as she can, the project. She felt inspired by the idea that her work will be as useful to the international students as it is now to the Finnish students.

### 3.1.3 HAMK University of Applied Sciences and another university of applied sciences

The representatives of two other universities of applied sciences I met while completing my pedagogical studies at Haaga-Helia. Both interviews took place on 6 May 2009.

Sven Rassi is a work placement coordinator in the Degree Programme in International Business at HAMK University of Applied Sciences. Their institution does not have special arrangements for international students. They have, however, a *Buddy-system*, which means that a Finn supports a foreigner during their studies. Most of the students go back to their home countries because it is difficult to find job or temporary work-placement. Sven Rassi pointed out that finding a job is totally up to the students. They do not search actively for a job, or they lack self-marketing skills.

*“There are certain groups of students, mainly coming from European countries, who don’t have problems finding a job. They just go to*

*companies and ask; they actively search and try to arrange something for themselves. Very often the jobs are right for their practical training but more important is that they work. Then they go to their home countries and that's it. The Asian students have not been active at all. They, kind of, wait for us to take care of them."* (Rassl 2009.)

The other interviewee wanted to remain unnamed (CC 2009). In her institution assistance to international students in finding work placements are often discussed topic amongst students and teachers. The reality is that teacher-tutors of the degree programme taught in English simply do not receive resources for helping the international students find a placement in the local economy. In the past they had had a couple of agreements with companies who would take a certain number of foreign students (for example, at the local airport). But they found out that those companies were more interested in free labour and usually had the students completing mediocre tasks that were not conducive to their training in the tourism or international business areas.

Ideally the students would stay in the town for work placements and continue working for the company once their graduation has ended. Unfortunately this does not happen. A few years ago a new grant began to be offered for international students (i.e. anyone who does not possess Finnish citizenship although permanent residents could apply) who found a work placement in the town. The idea was to encourage students to search for work placements in the area in hopes that they will become more integrated into the local society and hopefully desire to stay in the same area after graduation.

"The greatest problem (in my opinion and that of many employers) is that our students do not have the Finnish language skills needed. My institution simply does not offer enough Finnish language coverage in the current (and past) curriculum. Students have only been offered 6 ECTS throughout 3.5 years of study. It's simply impossible to learn unless the student takes courses elsewhere." (CC 2009.)

“Here are few problems, related to finding work placements for foreign students:

- Not enough credits offered in Finnish language – new curriculum offers 10 but in my opinion it should be a minimum of 15-18 credits
- Limited resources (for tutors) to assist foreign students who are looking for placements
- International students are not very aware of the local companies and are only exposed to select few during their first year or two of studies – by the time the groups have started their basic training period students start to learn more but that takes place in the second year of studies
- Lack of partnerships/ agreements with local companies who could take our students
- Institution not understanding (or wanting to understand) the implications of not helping students find placements i.e. the students get frustrated and seek better opportunities in the Helsinki area
- Institution wants to be seen as internationally focused but very few of the personnel actually work with the foreign students and often their opinions are not solicited with the curriculum planning and with projects that involve reaching out to the local companies.” (CC 2009.)

## 3.2 Benchmarking

### 3.2.1 Lahti University of Applied Sciences

Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LAMK) has started marketing their foreign degree students already in 2007 through a project with special funding. For developing this project they have established a few basic points:

- In the sector of university education, there will be a person and/or recruiting service to take care of foreign degree students’ work placements and related to them contacts with the companies.
- During the process there will be requirement for frequent collection of feedback.



- The model of the work placement has to be developed in coordination with the umbrella organisations (clusters), not just with the company itself (remark: in practice it did not work).
- The students have to sign the work placement contract and get a copy of it as well.
- There will be a feedback discussion between the student and the representative of the school after the work placement period has been completed.
- The students have to be active in searching work placement themselves. On the other hand it will be useful if the university helps as well.
- The procedure (blueprint) is going to be linked to larger entity. The work placement has to respond to the needs of the competences.
- The companies will need to receive more information on the background of the potential trainee.
- The university will need to give examples of possible work tasks.
- The companies will need to receive better support for realization of the work placement of the foreign trainee. The contact people from both university and company will need to work side by side.
- The significance of the work placement has to be observed from the high management in both the university and the company and the necessary resources will be allocated.

The future of the project is unclear at the moment. LAMK continues with own resources. They can realize the project if there other institutions are interested to cooperate with them. (Porasmaa 2009.)

LAMK has developed a model: Practical Training of Foreign Students in Finnish Companies. It is attached as an appendix (apex.3)

## 4 CONSTRAINTS IN DATA COLLECTION

### 4.1 Attitude towards foreigners

The title of this subchapter is conditional. It is more appropriate to talk about working culture and how it can influence the decision for hiring or not hiring foreigners. The exploration of this matter in detail would start another research. That is the reason to consider only few factors that are addressed in many researches about Finland and the ones that are believed to be important.

Some categorise cultures in relation to their management of “time”. The concept *time-management* has become almost commercial since it is related to *time is money*. This is very typical for the English speaking countries. How people think about time vary great deal across cultures. From that they can learn what is their typical way of communication (how they build networks) and what the value of communication as a process is (do they tend to use low or high context of information). (Gore 2007, 71.)

There is also a link between how people manage time and information – *time management is an indicator of information management*. Polychronic mindset prefers a high contextualization of information, while monochronic behaviour supports a low contextualization of information. (Gore 2007, 74.) As it is stated by Gore, time can be critical notion when building a team is involved. The fear of breaking the corporate culture might come partially from the fear of breaking the time rituals in one team. Coming late to work, smoking not only during the breaks can be difficult to swallow, especially if it is done by a foreigner.

In an organisational context, Senge (1994, 235) talks about learning teams. The *groove* in the team is important if they want to play well. In this condition empowerment of the individual will empower the whole team. (Senge 1994, 235.) Continuing the thoughts of Senge, one can say that a foreigner in the ‘band’ might be a good musician but needs different *groove* to play well. Or

might never get to the same level as the others because instead of the notes they play tonight she/he has taken the notes for next week.

A more concrete picture of the attitudes towards foreigners is presented in the research made by students from the International Business Programme at KyUAS, conducted under the guidance of Ulla and Markku Puustelli and presented by Ulla Puustelli. The research was conducted in Kotka and Kouvola and 321 people answered the questions. Fifty three per cent were women with the mean age of 40. (Puustelli 2006.)

There are 71 nationalities in Kotka and a few less in Kouvola. The answers show that Finns are interested in other cultures. The interviewed find it favourable if there are more students and tourists coming to Finland although the opinion that Finns are prejudiced towards foreigners prevails. The research also shows that the respondents favour some nationalities more than others. Swedes, Germans, Americans and Chinese are accepted in more positive way than for example foreigners coming from Somalia, Russia and Afghanistan. (Puustelli 2006.)

To summarise, it is to be pointed out that various factors that influence people's attitudes towards foreigners have to be discussed cohesively in order to get the real picture of the situation. Sometimes it might happen that working with people from one's own culture is as demanding as working with people from other cultures. It would not be fair then to lay the blame on the other culture. The experiences companies get from hiring foreigners could be the only proof of how this works. As one of the respondents said, it is useless to speculate before you experience how it is to work with foreigners.

## 4.2 Researcher's own experience

The 8 years that I have been living in Finland has taught me a lot not only to understand Finns but to be aware of the other nations' qualities as well as understanding myself better. It was a bit scary at the start of the interviews.

Finnish communicate better with silence than other nations do (World Business Culture n.d). I was afraid that the interviewees will be unwilling to speak with a foreigner about those topics. It took me a long time before I actually arranged the first interview. After that I got the confidence of a researcher.

Of course, there were some challenges in arranging the interviews. I was writing emails in both Finnish and English hoping to get an answer in English. Then the way they reacted to my request became an important element in my observations. It came to my mind that this could be considered as their attitude to foreigners. How someone will hire a foreigner if it is difficult to speak with him/her. It was interesting that all the interviewees wanted to speak in English.

Some doubts at the beginning made me think that it will be a very difficult research. And what is worse, I thought that it will be not enriching and beneficial neither to the organisation nor to me personally. Now when it is over I can say that it was a very educational experience. I met a lot of new people who were excited of what they are doing and also about the research. I got all the possible help from them. There was not a single obstruction during the conversations coming from culture differences or any other critical situation.

After the official interviews there was conducted a quick research on a small scale, although without any research value. Nevertheless, it contributed to the observation points and contributed to the understanding that this matter brings sensitivity. And the use of this sensitivity helps to avoid generalising. Some shop keepers on Manski were asked: "Do you know that KyUAS has foreign students who study International Business". The results proved Tiina Moberg's statement that not many people know that there are international students studying in English at KyUAS. But they know about the students from Russia who they hire as shop assistants.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

### 5.1 Summary of the outcomes

The results show that the first step is to create a good strategy for marketing the international students to the companies. It can be started with telling companies who the students are. Here are a few main points:

1. **Where do the students come from?** At the moment companies know mainly about KyUAS's Finnish and Russian students. Companies hire them with pleasure, because they do their job very well.
2. **What can they do?** Practical skills are more important than what their education is, where they have studied before, what kind of skills they got. Their skills and qualifications are the ones that companies need.
3. **What are they studying at the moment?** – Companies need to know what they are studying in terms of subjects which support their skills.
4. **What kind of projects can they handle?** The type of the projects will be related to what they want to do; do they want small or big projects and what the projects need to be related to.
5. **What kind of job do they want?** It is good if it is mentioned are they aiming at a part-time job, full-time job, work placement or thesis.
6. **In what field of business do they want to be engaged?** Student's interests will be very important for their choice of place. It is good to state what they like - finance, marketing, trade, product development.

The companies know little or nothing about KyUAS's international students. Involving them in joint projects will increase the awareness and give new ideas of the future of this cooperation and networking.

Finnish language is important part of the skills package. But its importance could vary according to the position and the company the students are applying for. In 'live' customer service it is more than necessary to speak Finnish well but it is not necessarily needed in other positions e.g. product development, project management, international trade and other similar working places.

## 5.2 Recommendations for implementation

### 5.2.1 What should KyUAS do?

The research supports the idea that most of the undertakings are in the hands of KyUAS. The LCCE concept is a big step forward and one of its functions is to support the students in finding their work placements. The LCCE concept has been presented for the first time in English on 29.09.2009 but it is not yet translated into English, so that foreign students will know in detail what is going on. There is not sufficient information on how the international students' special qualifications could be used in different projects. Implementation of the learning and development function strategy needs recognition in order to add value to the brand. Since learning in organisation is supported by each member it is crucial that communication is equally circulated in the organisation

In addition to communicating the LCCE ideas to the foreign members of KyUAS organisation, the recommendations include acquiring permits for creation of a web site. Creating a web site requires financial, technical and administrative support. The financial and administrative support depends on the readiness of the KyUAS management to continue the project. The technical side of the project can be assigned to the IT students. They also need training places and with an efficient supervision and well structured plan they will carry out all these ideas. The information about the skills of the international students in KyUAS has to be up-to-date and relevant. The electronic form of presentation will be the best because it can be updated constantly. The job coordinator might have

the function to follow the content management of the web site together with the communication office of our university.

After creating the web site it can be linked to the web pages of different organizations like the Regional Organisation of Enterprises in Kymi (Kymen Yrittäjät), Kymenlaakso Chamber of Commerce (Kymenlaakson kauppakamari), and other interested organisations. Marketing the web site to the companies will be less costly than printing brochures and presentations of the students. Additionally the electronic form of presentation KyUAS can organise and take part in forums, seminars, fairs and other events where companies and international students can meet. They need to know about each other – what they can offer. Public organisations like EURES and TEKES have to take part in these activities as well. It is important to approach them and suggest regular meetings so that they are informed who the students are. At the same time the students are aware what kind of projects are going on and how they can participate in them. Throughout the research it came apparent that Kymen Yrittäjät will cooperate with KyUAS to promote the events to companies.

As many companies in Kymenlaakso are located in Hamina and Kotka ports. It might be difficult for students who already have their accommodation in Kouvola to go to live in Hamina or Kotka or commute every day if they find work placements there. It might be a good idea to ensure that it is possible to use students' apartments in Kotka. They can accommodate students from Kouvola, without the need for paying extra for traveling or living away from Kouvola.

When promoting KyUAS international students we need to remind them and the companies that the projects they can take part in do not need to be big. There is a possibility to find something simple but productive, interesting and beneficial to both parties. The integrity and the responsibility will be more important than the volume of the project.

KyUAS has to exploit all the opportunities that are possible and that some other universities of applied sciences have adopted. The "Buddy-system" at HAMK,

which Hannele Lappalainen had also suggested might work at some companies. The demands of the companies are very different and there is no doubt that we will need to tailor our marketing strategy. Having in mind the experience of LAMK University of Applied Sciences (see 3.2.4), there might be a need of appointing a coordinator of all the activities associated with the international students. There is a lot of work, at least at the beginning while everything is streamed, and a person involved 100 per cent in this matter might be the most appropriate for reaching the target.

This particular person will need to coordinate the project from the very beginning – starting with the issuing of different permits for administrative, financial, and technical support. She/ he can be also involved in a job counselling. As a coordinator she/he will need to follow what kind of information is published on the web site as well. Not only the students but also KyUAS will guarantee that the information is genuine. Publishing of irrelevant information might damage the image of KyUAS irreversibly.

### 5.2.2 What should the companies do?

Companies in Kymenlaakso criticize the lack of qualified workers, which has affected negatively their growth. The LCCE concept and KymiDesign & Business are the link between students and companies. The resources that all the participants in this learning partnership offer should be used for the benefit of all organisations and communities. Companies can offer more jobs and projects and with KyUAS's support find versatile and skillful workforce which will support their competitiveness. It will also increase the competitiveness and enhance the brand of KyUAS among the other universities of applied sciences.

The research found out that many companies do not know that KyUAS is educating foreign students in International Business Programme. One can say companies are not interested in finding out what kind of the opportunities they are offered locally, in their own municipality. Nevertheless, the poor marketing of KyUAS's international students is most probably related to this lack of



knowledge of the companies. The implementation of this project will most probably enhance the companies' awareness of the diverse background of our students.

### 5.2.3 What should the foreign students do?

The foreign students are one of the objects in this research. They need to be active in job and project search and take part in projects that are offered. It is essential for them to perceive the projects as a step into the working life in Finland. In other words they should seize every opportunity to show who they are and what they are good at. In case this research is carried on, their active participation is highly appreciated. Their skills and qualifications can contribute to the further development of the web site, in organising events and forums to show what they can do. Organising events each year, mainly by the first year students can turn into a good tradition and become a forum for promoting themselves and their skills. Inviting representatives from companies and foreign partners will turn it into such a forum.

Further development of the project will require certain assurance that foreign students are interested in finding work placements in the area. Many of them go to their home country for the summer and find a training place there. Job counselling and emphasizing the importance of getting to know the Finnish business environment can be the starting point of involving the students into the development of the project. The LCCE concept is created to bring logic to what is done and what lies ahead. Simultaneously, involvement of foreign students into the activities of the university will convey the meaning of the LCCE to the members of our organisation and partners. Encouraging students' active search for work placement or a project with a Finnish company is a good way to achieve success.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND BENEFITS OF THE RESERACH

Although there are many projects and initiatives for integrating foreigners into the local business life, there is still a doubt that the organisations are not doing enough. At the end of the project it became clearer that there are many issues to be handled in the future. There are still plenty of possibilities but this is a good start for creating opportunities for students and companies to be brought together. Students also need to be counselled on the possibilities of getting a job in Finland. Their active search and self-marketing makes it easier for the companies, as they could assess what students' interests are. KyUAS has to increase the amount of the services for foreign students before the project is continued. That is a way to learn more about the students and get fresh ideas. Implementation of the project could generate different opportunities for KyUAS. The creation of different scenarios is expected to help in evaluating what is the best to do from all the suggested options. A mere suggestion is to include all the parties – students, KyUAS and companies - in the process of creating the scenarios.

Integration, internationalisation, globalisation and many other similar concepts have a central part in business life. Construction of business programmes in universities of applied sciences is based on integration with businesses. Organisations take into consideration the impact of their activities on the environment and society. With changes in the society and the orientation to business life, the demands for adjustment of policies and values grow by the hour and challenge intellectually each individual. Additionally the internal changes in organisations, the well-being of the customers has to be ensured as well. Customers are maintaining the existence of an organisation and justify its activities.

Enhancement of KyUAS brand seems to be the natural continuance in building up our image in future. The potential of the LCCE concept promotes KyUAS as unique institution among the other universities of applied sciences. The brand could add the special value to the service we provide and bring prestige and

image. Integration of international students into the business life and building up a strong KyUAS brand are small pieces in the global integration puzzle. But for the community in the region integration is a significant step ahead. To the companies integration provides a new dimension of their aspirations. For the students integration creates a new learning environment and gives competitive edge. For our university integration is a better image, less resignations of the students and a new perspective to KyUAS brand. Universities of applied sciences train professionals and support local growth by conducting research and development. Nevertheless, it is an impossible goal without cooperation with the companies in the region and the active participation of the students. The cooperation adds to international networking, competitiveness and innovativeness as factors to improve the competence and education of the citizens.

Internationalisation of KyUAS is not only an essential element for constructing the future image, development of KyUAS practices and the brand, it is also a significant ingredient in enhancing students' potential. Another ingredient is the understanding of the Finnish business environment by the foreign students. These contribute to the attractiveness of the business life and living in Finland as well as to the creation of stable and prolific networks. More and more students from different nationalities are trying to acquire multicultural experiences by joining the exchange programmes, or just applying for a study place in the Degree Programme in International Business. In practice KyUAS offers a good package of learning and a challenging environment. It has been acknowledged by the students as well. However, there is a need for better organisation and coordination between us and our business partners in order to provide work placements and/or thesis topics related to the field of studies for our international students; and to contribute to the cooperation between students, companies and KyUAS. KymiDesign & Business seems to have the leading role in these processes. The pragmatic results of the research confirm the long time discussed prospects of networking and developing common projects. Creating learning organisation is not isolated process and the best results are achieved with mutual forces.

## REFERENCE LIST

- Adler Sergio, The President of Aguila Ky and owner of cafe 'Caminito' in Kouvola, Personal interview 25.09.2009.
- Altbach, Philip G. & Knight, Jane 2006, 'The internationalization of higher education: motivations and realities', *The NEA 2006 Almanac of Higher Education*
- Ammattikorkeakoululaki 9.5.2003/ 351  
<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2003/20030351>
- Annual Responsibility Report 2008 (KyUAS)  
<http://www.KyUAS.fi/Kymenlaakso%20UAS/About%20KyAMK/Annual%20Reports/Responsibility%20Report%202008>
- ARENE (updated n.d, accessed 9.10.2009) *Universities of Applied Sciences*,  
[http://www.arene.fi/sivu.asp?luokka\\_id=42&main=3](http://www.arene.fi/sivu.asp?luokka_id=42&main=3)
- Arolainen-Peltola Päivi, Career and Recruiting Services at KyUAS, Personal interview 26.05.2009.
- Ayoubi, Rami M. & Massoud, Hiba K. 2007, 'The strategy of internationalization in universities: A quantitative evaluation of the intent and implementation in UK universities', *International Journal of Educational Management*, vol.21, no.4, pp.329-349
- Belanger, C. Mount, J. & Wilson, M 2002, 'Institutional Image and Retention', *Tertiary Education and Management*, vol.8, pp.217-230.
- Bryman, Alan & Bell, Emma 2007, *Business Research Methods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford University Press.
- Carnall, Colin 2007, *Managing Change in Organizations*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Prentice Hall

Clack, Hugh 2009, Student induction strategies, Kouvola, Master's thesis,  
Kymenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu University of Applied Sciences

Davenport, Thomas H. & Prusak, Laurence 2000, *Working Knowledge, How Organizations Manage What They Know*, Harvard Business School Press.

Employment and Economic Development Office (updated 26.01.2009, cited 11.10.2009), *Foreigners Working in Finland*,  
<[http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99\\_pdf/fi/06\\_tyoministerio/06\\_julkaisut/05\\_esitteet/tme7601e\\_workinginfinland.pdf](http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/99_pdf/fi/06_tyoministerio/06_julkaisut/05_esitteet/tme7601e_workinginfinland.pdf)>

European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET) (updated 30.10.2008, cited 9.10.2009) <[http://www.hbo-raad.nl/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=41&Itemid=5](http://www.hbo-raad.nl/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=41&Itemid=5)>

European Union (updated March 2009, cited 13.10.2009), 'Freedom, Security and Justice',  
<[http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/fsj/freetravel/fsj\\_freetravel\\_intro\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/freetravel/fsj_freetravel_intro_en.htm)>

Finnish Ministry of Education n.d (updated n.d., accessed 26.05.2008) Education, 'Polytechnic education in Finland'  
<<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/ammattikorkeakoulutus/?lang=en>>

Finnish Ministry of Education 2001 (updated n.d, cited 22.10.2009), *International strategy of higher education institutions*,  
<[http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2001/korkeakoulutuksen\\_kansainvalisen\\_toiminnan\\_strategia?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2001/korkeakoulutuksen_kansainvalisen_toiminnan_strategia?lang=en)>

Finnish Ministry of Education 2009 (updated n.d, cited 2.10.2009), *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015*  
<[http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/artikkelit/korkeakoulujen\\_kv/liitteet/Strategy\\_Internationalisation\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Institutions.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/artikkelit/korkeakoulujen_kv/liitteet/Strategy_Internationalisation_Higher_Education_Institutions.pdf)>

Ghauri, Pervez & Grønhaug, Kjell 2005, *Research Methods in Business Studies, A Practical Guide*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Prentice Hall.

Golafshani, Nahid 2003, Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research, *The Qualitative Report*, vol.8, no.4, pp.597-607.  
<<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf>>

Gore, Kevin 2007, *Networking Cultural Knowledge*, WSOY.

Jansink, Femke. Kwakman, Kitty & Streumer, Jan 2005, 'The knowledge-productive corporate university', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol.29, no.1, pp.40-57.

Jevons, Colin 2006, 'Universities: a prime example of branding going wrong', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol.15, issue 7.

Hansen, Holly Moran 2002, 'Defining international education', *New Directions for Higher Education*, Spring 2002, no.117, pp. 5-12

Häyrynen-Alestalo, Marja & Peltola, Ulla 2006, 'The problem of a market-oriented university', *Higher Education*, Sep2006, vol.52, issue 2, pp. 251-281.

Kets de Vries, Manfred 2006, *The Leadership Mystique*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Prentice Hall

KyUAS 2009 (updated 16.06.2009; cited 2.10.2009), *About KyUAS*,  
<<http://www.kyamk.fi/Kymenlaakso%20UAS/About%20KyAMK>>

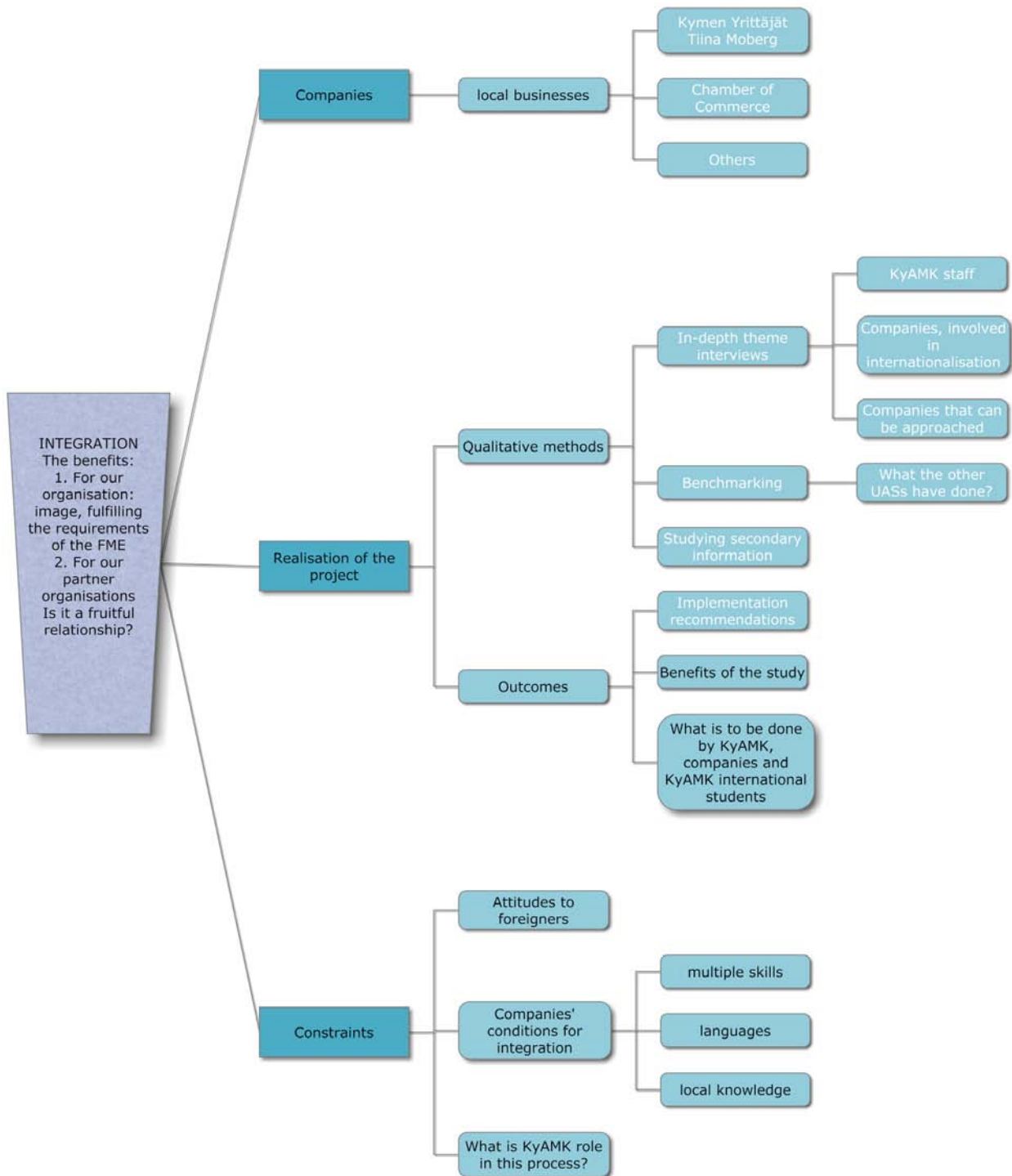
KyUAS 2009 (updated 20.10.2009; cited 22.10.2009), *KymiDesign & Business*,  
<<http://www.kyamk.fi/Tutkimus-%20ja%20kehitt%C3%A4mist%C3%A4mista/T%20%26%20K%20-osaamiskeskittym%C3%A4t/KymiDesign%26Business>>

- Kymen Yrittäjät ry (updated n.d, cited 10.10.2009) *Kymen Yrittäjät – yksityisen yrityselämän edunvalvoja* <<http://yhdistys.yrittajat.fi/kymi/index?page=5>>
- Kyrö, Paula 2003, 'Revising the concept and forms of benchmarking', *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 210-25.
- Kyrö, Paula 2004, 'Benchmarking as an action research process', *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 52-73
- Lake, Sarah 2008, 'Training Young Leaders to Effect Change Abroad', *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, 15575411, 20 March, vol.25, issue 3
- Lappalainen Hannele, Responsible for Training of the Finnish Students at KyUAS, Personal interview 18.05.2008,
- Liikanen, Erkki 2008, *Population aging in Finland: Consequences and policy actions, Presentation: Bang of Greece 17 January 2008*, <[http://www.bof.fi/NR/rdonlyres/F563893A-9A96-408A-90B2-6AFA90E0B1B6/0/080117EL\\_Athens.pdf](http://www.bof.fi/NR/rdonlyres/F563893A-9A96-408A-90B2-6AFA90E0B1B6/0/080117EL_Athens.pdf)>
- Lincoln, Y S and Guba, EG 1985, *Naturalistic inquiry*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lorange, Peter 1996 'A business school as a learning organization' *The Learning Organization*, vol.3, no.5, pp. 5–13
- Moberg Tiina, The President of Kymen Yrittäjät, Personal interview 3.4.2009
- Moriarty, JP. & Smallman, C. 2009, 'En route to a theory of benchmarking', *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, vol. 16, no. 4 pp. 484-503
- Myers, M.D. 2009 *Qualitative Research in Business & Management*, Sage Publications, London.

- Parsons, Christine & Fidler, Brian 2005, 'A new theory of educational change – punctuated equilibrium: The case of the internationalisation of higher education institutions', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, December 2005, vol.53, no.4, pp.447–465
- Pasanen Sakari, The Managing Director of Tykkimäki Amusement Park, Personal interview 30.09.2009,
- Pelli R. & Tulkki P. 2009, *LCCE: Do we have it?*, Presentation material 28.09.2009, Kasarminmäki Campus, Kouvola.
- Pietilä, Kreetta-Maria 2007, *Internationalization of SMEs: Case Kymen Yrittäjät ry.*, Bachelor Thesis, Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu.
- Puustelli, Ulla 2006, *Asenteet ulkomaalaisia kohtaan tutkimus 2006*, Presentation material.
- Phillipson, Chris 2007, 'Undersatnding the Baby Boom Generation: Copmaritive Perspectives', *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, vol.2, no.2, pp.7-11.
- Porasmaa, Minna 2009, "Ulkomaalaisten tutkinto-opiskelijoiden työharjoittelut Suomessa", *Presentation 28.9.2009*, LAMK University of Applied Sciences.
- Rassl Sven, Work Placement Coordinator in the Degree Programme in International Business at HAMK University of Applied Sciences, Personal interview 6 May 2009,
- Senge, Peter M. 1994, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Currency Doubleday, the USA
- Strauss, Anselm & Corbin, Juliet 1990, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications.



- Teichler, Ulrich 2005, 'Research on higher education in Europe', *European Journal of Education*, vol.40, no.4 pp. 447-469.
- Thune, Taran & Welle-Strand, Anne 2005, 'ICT for and in internationalization processes: A business school case study', *Higher Education*, Nov 2005, vol.50 issue 4, pp. 593-611
- Tulkki, Pasi 2009, 'Oppimisen ja työn yhteys', *Kohti Oppimisen ja Osaamisen Ekosysteemiä (Learning and Competence Creating Ecosystem – LCCE)*, Kymenlaakson ammattikorkeakoulu 2009, Kouvola, pp.34-37
- Vainio Siru, The owner of Siru Design and the President of Kouvolan Yrittäjät, Personal interview 23.09.2009.
- Välimaa, Jussi 2004, 'Nationalisation, localisation and globalisation in Finnish higher education', *Higher Education*, Jul 2004, vol.48, issue 1, pp.27-54,
- Watson, G.H. 1993, *Strategic Benchmarking: How to Rate Your Company's Performance against the World's Best*, Wiley, New York.
- World Business Culture (updated n.d, cited 12.10.2009),  
<<http://www.worldbusinessculture.com>>
- Örtenblad, Anders 2004, 'The learning organization: towards an integrated model', *The Learning Organization*, vol.11, issue 2, pp. 129-144

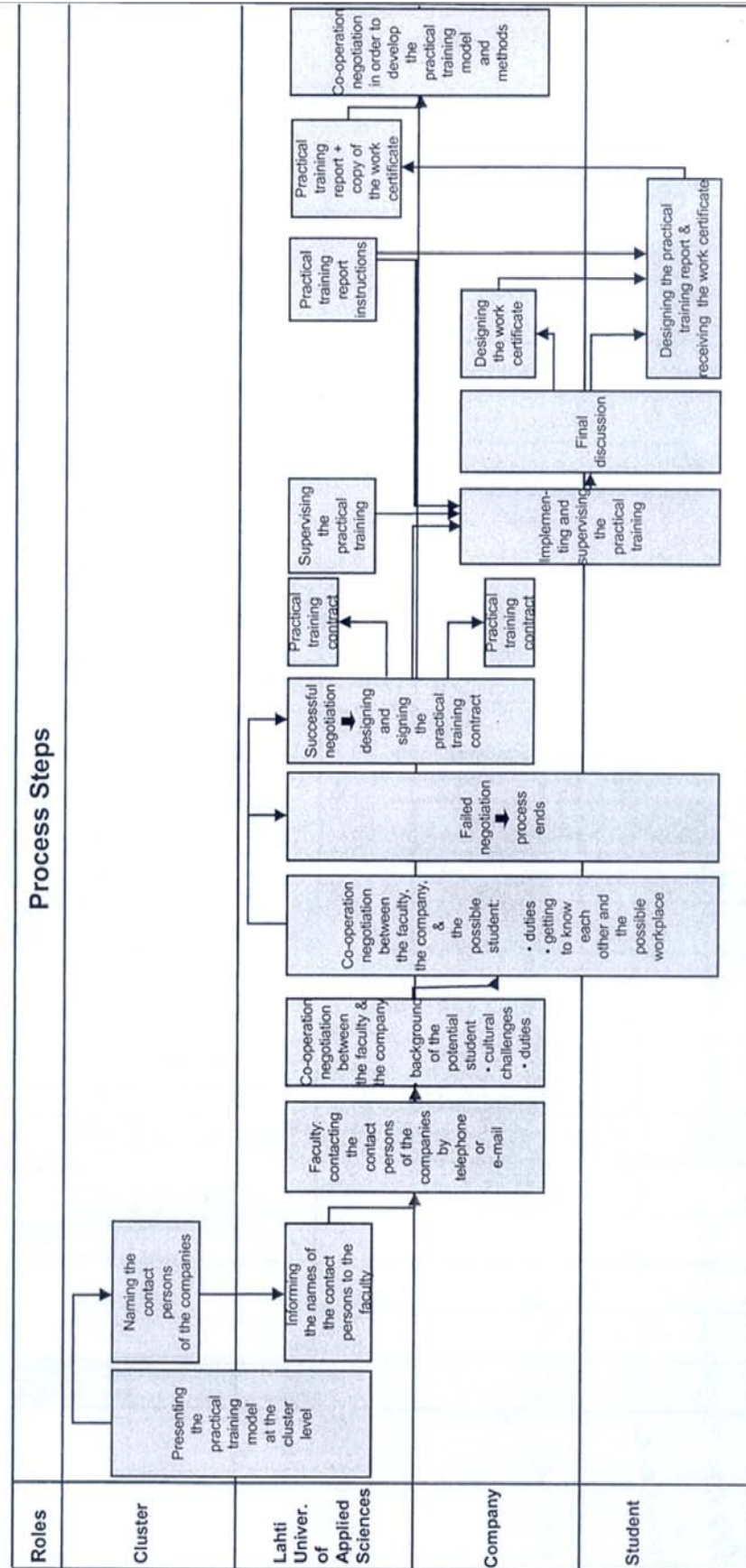


## CONCERNS THAT MIGHT AFFECT INTERNATIONALISATION

<i>Political reality and national securities</i>	Threats of terrorist acts which may restrict the students flow e.g. change of visa requirements, etc.
<i>Government policies and the cost of study</i>	Cost of visas, tuition fees, documentation flow costs
<i>Expanded domestic capacity</i>	Countries that initially seek for export of academic students may develop their own system and increase the demand for students in their own countries
<i>English</i>	The growing use of it stimulates search of programmes conducted in English.
<i>The internationalisation of the curriculum</i>	Students seeks studies in more industrially developed countries
<i>E-learning</i>	Acceptance of degrees leads to an extended meaning of distance learning
<i>The private sector</i>	Small part of it is international at the moment
<i>Quality assurance and control</i>	Difficult to follow international standards and measure it adequately.
<i>European policies</i>	It is interesting to see is EU going to have education within the EU or between EU and the rest of the world

Altbach & Knight 2006, 35 (adapted from: Altbach, Philip G. & Knight, Jane 2006, 'The internationalization of higher education: motivations and realities', *The NEA 2006 Almanac of Higher Education*)

## MODEL: PRACTICAL TRAINING OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN FINNISH COMPANIES



**LAHDEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU**  
Lahti University of Applied Sciences

Designer: Minna Tiihonen  
Information: Maija Romo

